A Plain and Familiar

DISCOURSE

BY WAY OF

DIALOGUE

BETWIXT A

MINISTER and his PARISHIONER,

Concerning the

Catholick Church.

IN THREE PARTS.

I. Shewing what's the Nature of the Catholick Church.
II. That the Church of *Rome* is not the Catholick Church.
III. That the Scriptures, and not the Church, are the Rule of Faith.

Which may serve as an Answer to some late Tracts upon that Argument.

By a Divine of the Church of *England.*

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Clavel*, and *B. Tooke*, at the *Peacock*, and at the *Ship*, in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.* 1687.

TO THE

READER.

READER,

THE *Design of this Tract is to furnish thee with Answers to the many Captious Questions of the* Romanists, *concerning the Church. Hence thou wilt be enabled to shew them where our Religion was before* Luther, *and our Church before* Henry *the* 8th. *Here thou wilt see the Church of* England *vindicated from Novelty and Schism; the Church of* Rome *condemn'd for Usurpation and Tyranny; That the Traditions of that Church are spurious, and its Infallibility not to be trusted; But that being in the communion of the Church of* England, *thou art in a safe bottom; and that having the Scripture for thy Rule, thou hast a sure Guide. I have made it short, that it might not be chargeable; and in the way of Dialogue, that it might be easie. If thou reapest any benefit by it, bless God, and pray for the Author.* Farewel.

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MINISTER and his PARISHIONER,

Concerning the

CATHOLICK CHURCH.

PART I.

Shewing the Nature of the Catholick Church.

Par. SIR, I come to thank you for your many useful Discourses of late to your people, and especially for one of them.

Min. I endeavour'd to make them as useful as I could, and I pray God they may be useful: But what is that one you mentioned?

Par.

Par. 'Twas that concerning the *Catholick Church*; Truly, I was very much pleas'd with it; and the rather, becauſe the *Romiſh* Prieſts that are now very buſy in practiſing upon the people, inſiſt on this as their main Artifice; What? Will ye not believe the Church? Is there any Salvation out of the Church? And the like.

Min. I am very glad you took ſo much notice of it, and I hope the reſt of my hearers did ſo too; I heard as much as you tell me, concerning this ſophiſtical device of theirs to corrupt our people, and I Preach'd it on purpoſe to arm them againſt it.

Par. But that I ſhould rob you too much of your time, I would beg the favour to diſcourſe it a little over again with you; for I am pretty much abroad, and often happen into the company of *Papiſts*, and ſometimes of Prieſts, and the Subject of Diſcourſe is uſually, *The Catholick Church:* Now, I would be glad to be ſo furniſhed, as to be able to ſtand my ground againſt them.

Min. With all my heart; time cannot be better ſpent than in doing ſo good a work.

Par. If you pleaſe then, I'll propoſe the queſtions to you, as ſometimes they propoſe them to me. And the firſt is, What's meant by the *Catholick Church?*

Min. Taking your Queſtion to be meant of the Church ſince Chriſt's coming in the fleſh, without any reſpect to Angels or good men before the Goſpel (who yet are ſometimes included in it) I thus deſcribe it; The whole number of Chriſtians in all ages and places, admitted into the Church by Baptiſm, and gathered into particular Churches under their

their reſpective Paſtors and Biſhops, united to one another, and to Chriſt their Head, by the profeſſion of one Faith or Religion.

Par. Pray, *Sir*, let me deſire you to take this deſcription again aſunder; I perceive there are many things included in it; and I deſire to underſtand this point throughly.

Min. Agreed. Ask then any thing about it that you doubt of, and would be ſatisfied in.

Par. I would know firſt, Of what does the *Catholick Church* conſiſt?

Min. I have told you; The whole number of Chriſtians in all Ages and Places; Every individual perſon that hath given up his name to Chriſt, and makes profeſſion of his Religion, is a Member of this Church, and all of them together make up the *Catholick Church*, or the Myſtical Body of Chriſt. *Now ye are the body of Chriſt, and members in particular*, ſays the Apoſtle; I might alſo tell you that the word in the Original, uſed to expreſs the Church by, properly ſignifies the whole number of perſons belonging to any City or Corporation aſſembled together. 1 Cor. 12. 27. Ἐκκλησία.

Par. What is the Rite or Ceremony, whereby perſons are initiated into the Church, and made Members of it?

Min. Baptiſm, or immerſion into, or ſprinkling with water; ſo our Lord and Saviour ordain'd: *Go ye and teach all nations, baptiſing them in the name of the father, and of the ſon, and of the holy ghoſt.* Matt. 28. 19.

Par. Muſt not this Body have a Head, and one that is ſupreme in it?

Min. I have expreſt that alſo: 'Tis the Lord Je-
Eph. 5. 23. ſus Chriſt; *He*, ſays the Apoſtle, *is the head of the Church, and Saviour of the body.* He's the Founder of this Order; he governs it by his Laws, inſpires it by his Spirit, protects it by his Providence.
Matt. 28. 18. To him *is committed all power in heaven and earth*, by virtue whereof he hath conſtituted ſeveral Officers and Governours in his Church under him: But for one Vicar-general, or Lieutenant over the whole, there is not the leaſt ground in Scripture, as I may have an occaſion to ſhew you.

Par. You have prevented me the asking you that Queſtion, Whether Chriſt hath left a viſible Head on Earth? yet I have one or two more queſtions about this matter to put to you; Pray, what is it makes the *Catholick Church* one?

Min. The profeſſion of one Faith, or Chriſtianity. But two things you muſt here remember: (1.) By Faith or Chriſtianity, I mean the whole Inſtitution or Doctrine of Chriſt contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, eſpecially thoſe of the *New-Teſtament*. And then (2.) that this Faith or Religion muſt be publickly profeſt, which is beſt done by meeting together, and worſhipping God according to the preſcriptions Chriſt hath left us in his Goſpel, one chief part whereof is our frequent participation of the Bleſſed Sacrament, which our Lord hath inſtituted as a federal Rite of his Church, aptly repreſenting both that near conjunction betwixt Chriſt and his Church, and that mutual fellowſhip of one Chriſti-
1 Cor. 10. 17. an with another. So St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.* 'Tis this gave being to the

the Church, and on this depends its unity: To preſerve the Faith from corruption, is to preſerve the Church from Schiſms; but to add to, or diminiſh from the Faith, is to break and divide the Church.

Par. Why did you ſay in your deſcription of the Church, That Believers muſt be gathered into particular Churches, under their ſeveral Paſtors and Biſhops?

Min. For very good reaſon; becauſe otherwiſe it might be a rout or multitude, but not a Church. As, the profeſſion of Chriſtianity unites the ſeveral members to one another, and all to Chriſt their common Head; ſo, that there might be order and government amongſt the Members, and that the ſeveral acts of Communion in the Church (whereby their profeſſion of Chriſt's Religion is chiefly manifeſted and maintain'd) might be duly perform'd, 'tis neceſſary that there ſhould be Officers to direct, and overſee, and take care in the diſcharge of them. Hence ſaies the Apoſtle, *Chriſt gave in his Church, ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying the body of Chriſt*; And tho' theſe Paſtors and Biſhops are Officers of the Church in general, and may on occaſion adviſe and act for the good of the whole, and exerciſe their power and function in any part of it; yet for the greater advantage and better edification of Believers, 'twas neceſſary every Biſhop, and Presbyter under his Biſhop, ſhould be ſet his own bounds and limits; what to be his particular charge, and where more eſpecially to concern his care and conduct; Eph. 4. 11.

each of which charges within ſuch a compaſs, are parts of the *Catholick Church*, as agreeing in the ſame Faith, and making profeſſion of it in the ſame acts of Communion.

Par. But if Biſhops and Paſtors are the peculiar Officers of Chriſt's Church, What place and power do you allow the ſupreme Magiſtrate in this Government?

Min. Tho' Kings and Princes are not properly Officers and Governours of Chriſt's Church, as a Church, it being not a Civil or Secular, but a diſtinct, Spiritual Society; yet to them is to be given the external management of this Society, a power to ſettle its outward Policy, and to be the Moderators and Governors of it: Upon this account the Great *Conſtantine* ſtiled himſelf a Civil Biſhop, as being chiefly concern'd in the guidance and direction of the outward affairs of the Church. The Biſhops and Paſtors of the Church have their Ordination, and derive their Commiſſion from an higher power, even Chriſt; but they act and exerciſe it under the protection of the ſupreme Magiſtrate.

Ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ἐκτὸς.

Par. You have very well clear'd the deſcription you gave of Chriſt's *Catholick Church*. Pray give me leave to ask you, Has not God promiſed that his Church ſhall never fail on Earth?

Min. Yes: And you have the promiſe in theſe words, *The gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*; And again, Chriſt ſpeaking to his Apoſtles, ſays, *I will be with you always to the end of the world.*

Matt. 16. 18.

Matt. 28. 20.

Par. I ſuppoſe this promiſe is made to the Univerſal *Catholick Church*, and not to any one part of it.

Min.

Min. It is ſo; and therefore you may obſerve our Saviour ſpeaks indefinitely, *My Church*, without naming any particular Church in this, or that other Countrey.

Par. But how far does this promiſe of our Saviour ſecure the *Catholick Church* from Error and defection?

Min. To be ſure, from all Fundamental Errors; For the Church can laſt no longer than that Doctrine remains in it that gave a being to it: Whatever Errors deſtroy that, deſtroy the Church: and therefore our Saviour's Promiſe muſt be ſuppos'd to preſerve it free from all ſuch Errors.

Par. What then is the true meaning of the Promiſe?

Min. It ſeems to be this; That there ſhall be always a Church in the World, in ſome place or other, profeſſing the true Faith of Chriſt, and living in the uſe of his holy inſtitutions ſo long as the World ſhall laſt.

Par. The *Catholick Church* then may err in ſome leſſer matters; I mean, in Points not Fundamental, and yet remain the true Church of Chriſt; and ſo may any part of it, and yet be a true Member of the whole.

Min. You ſay well: As a man may have many Infirmities and Wounds about him, and yet remain a true man: As a particular Chriſtian may be guilty of many miſtakes, both in Faith and Practice, and yet be a true Chriſtian, provided his miſtakes deſtroy not the Foundation of Chriſtianity. Were there not at ſome time very great Corruptions in the *Jewiſh* Church, even Idolatry it ſelf, and yet be-

becauſe they worſhipt the true God, tho others alſo, God did not wholly caſt them off from being his People? Was there not Faction and Prophaneſs, and great Miſtakes in point of Faith, concerning the Reſurrection, in the Church of *Corinth*, and yet St. *Paul* ſtill acknowledg'd them to be a real and true Church? Were not the Seven Churches in *Aſia* over-run with many Errors and unchriſtian Practices, and yet St. *John* writes to them by the Spirit, and in the Name of Chriſt himſelf, as unto true Chriſtian Churches?

Par. What was the *Catholick Church*? or where was it when *Luther* began his Reformation?

Min. Was I not able to tell you where, 'twould be no weakning to our Saviour's Promiſe: He might have a Chutch on Earth, tho not viſible to us: For he has no where promis'd, that the Number ſhould be always great, or its Condition proſperous: Nay, the Apoſtle foretold, that there ſhould be a great defection, *and falling away*. The Church has ſometimes been forc'd to hide, ſometimes to fly: Sometimes you find it privately in an Upper Room, ſometimes skulking in Caves, and Dens, and Wilderneſſes; now be-ſmear'd with Blood, then deform'd with Hereſie; ceaſing in one Countrey, riſing up in another; being more conſpicuous, or obſcure, as Perſecutions and Hereſies grew and prevail'd in it.

2 Theſ. 2. 3.

Par. This Diſcourſe brings into my mind the ſad Complaint of the Prophet *Elijah*, *Lord*, ſays he, *they have broken thy covenant, and deſtroy'd thy altars and prophets, and I only am left alive; and they ſeek my life alſo.* But God let him ſee, how much he

1 King. 19. 10.

he was miſtaken; that tho he knew it not, he had yet a ſmall Church, not infected with Idolatry; *I have yet ſeven thouſand knees that have not bowed to Baal.* So may it happen, that Chriſt's Church may look ſmall, and be obſcure in her Number, and yet I believe in all Ages, there was in ſome part and corner of the World, or other, a little Flock; ſome few true Chriſtians, that profeſt the true Faith, entire, and without mixture, and they made up the Church of Chriſt. Ver. 18.

Min. I am perfectly of your mind; and I think I am able to produce ſeveral inſtances to this purpoſe: Amongſt all the Corruptions in the *Romiſh* Church, ſcarce was there one, but what, when it firſt appear'd, was by one or other oppos'd and proteſted againſt. Have there not been many in that Communion it ſelf, that have openly complain'd of the degenerate State of their Church, and petition'd for a Reformation? And we may reaſonably preſume there are many ſtill, and would be thouſands more, were they not frighted, and kept in awe by their unreaſonable and unchriſtian Severities. The *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes* will ever be remembred, as ſo many Confeſſors and Martyrs for the Truth, as well as inſtances of the Papal cruelty. Old *Wickliff*, and his Followers, were ſtout Champions againſt the *Romiſh* Superſtitions in *England*; and poor *Huſſe*, and his Diſciples, were no leſs brave and reſolute againſt them in *Germany* and *Bohemia*.

Par. Indeed I have read of theſe; but the *Romaniſts* tell us, they were guilty of as great Errors, and lewd practices, if not worſe, than we think thoſe, that we charge upon them.

Min.

Min. 'Tis their common practice to blacken, and load every perſon that ſets up againſt them. I do not deny, but that ſome Errors they might have; however, theirs they had not: and for thoſe that are laid to their charge, ſome are not of any pernicious Nature and Conſequence, and others wholly falſe, and faſten'd on them out of deſign, by the malicious *Romaniſts*: Such are their ungodly Stories concerning the *Waldenſes*, that they were the Followers of the *Manichees*, owning Two Gods, one the Author and Principle of Good, the other of Evil: That they denied Chriſt to be God: It may be, becauſe they denied the Bread in the Sacrament to be Chriſt. But *Reinerus*, and St. *Bernard*, give a far different account of them.

Par. I ſhould be glad, if you remember it, to hear what they ſay of them.

Min. I'll repeat their Teſtimony to the beſt of my remembrance: *Reinerus* thus ſpeaks concerning them; *They continued ſo long as no Sect hath: Some ſay, it hath been ſince* Sylveſter, *ſome ſince the Apoſtles* (there is univerſality of time); *and there is almoſt no Countrey wherein it ſpreadeth not* (there is univerſality of place); *They have a great ſhew of piety, living uprightly before men, and believing all things aright concerning God, and all the Articles of the Creed:* Their only Fault was, as he adds, *They hate and blaſpheme the Church of* Rome. St. *Bernard* ſpeaks of them much to the ſame purpoſe: *If you require an account of their Faith, nothing is more Chriſtian; if of their Converſation, nothing more commendable; they frequent the Church, honour the Prieſts, offer their Gifts, make Confeſſion, and communicate in the Sacraments,*

Illyr. Catal. teſt. Devit. tom. 2. p. 543.

Serm. 65. ſuper Cant. edit. Venet. An. 1575. Tom. 1. p. 328.

ments: They hurt none, circumvent none, are true and just in all their dealings, and perform what they promis'd: all the Crime he tax'd them with, was, *that they did not observe the Monkish Vow of Continence.*

Par. What think you of all the particular National Churches in the World at the time of the Reformation? The *Roman*, *Greek*, *Armenian*, the *Ægyptian*, and *Abassine* Churches? Might they not all be parts of Christs Church?

Min. Each of these had its Errors and Corruptions, it must be confest; tho not one deprav'd to that degree as the *Roman*; yet because she holds all the Fundamental Articles of Faith, we, in charity, allow her to be a true Church, and so a part of the *Catholick.*

Par. Where was the Church of *England* then?

Min. She was included in the *Roman* Church, of which she was a Member, and held in subjection by her.

Par. But you allow the *Roman* Church was a part of Christs *Catholick Church:* why then did we separate from her?

Min. I said also, she was a very corrupt Church; and we separated from her only in those things wherein she had separated from the *Catholick Faith:* So that tho we went off from her, we went nearer and closer to the *Catholick Church.*

Par. But what Authority had the Church of *England* to reform her self, and redress Abuses?

Min. As she was a free independent Church, as well as the *Roman:* The *Romish* Church had indeed brought us into Slavery and Subjection, and by that means obtruded what Doctrines and Practices she

pleas'd, upon us; but the Authority was uſurpt, and the Impoſitions very groſs, calculated on purpoſe to maintain their ill-gotten greatneſs and power; So that our Reformation chiefly conſiſted in throwing off the *Roman* Yoak, and the ſpurious Doctrines ſhe had added to *the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, which is the Foundation of the Chriſtian Church.

Par. I perceive then, had the *Romiſh* Faith been ſound and Orthodox, the Church of *England* might have juſtly caſt off her Authority, being uſurp'd, and aſſerted her own Freedom; even as it's the Duty and Glory of a Nation to depoſe an Uſurper, tho his Laws and Government are never ſo excellent.

Min. You ſay right: ſhe might have done ſo; and then how much more reaſon had ſhe to do it, when both her Faith and Practices were ſo very unwholeſome and dangerous to mens Souls? And when the caſting off the one, made way for the eaſier getting rid of the other?

Par. What are thoſe corruptions in the *Romiſh* Church, that make her communion ſo unſafe and hazardous?

Min. They are thoſe Twelve new Articles of Faith added in Pope *Pius* the 4*th*'s Creed, *Tranſubſtantiation*, *Half-communion*, *Purgatory*, *Image-worſhip*, *Invocation of Saints*, and the reſt: You may meet with them all, and at the ſame time ſee them fully and excellently confuted in two little Books, come out lately; *Plauſible Arguments of the Church of* Rome *confuted*; and *Catechiſm*, &c.

Par. But can two Churches of different communions be both parts of the one *Catholick Church*?

They

They and we have but little or no communion with one another, and yet I ſee you grant them both to be parts of Chriſt's *Catholick Church.*

Min. Yes, we have ſtill communion with her in part, tho not in every part: We do not indeed hold communion with her, as her Subject and Slave, nor in her Corruptions and Errors; but we ſtill hold communion with her as a Siſter-Church, and ſo far as ſhe holds the Truth of Chriſt.

Par. But to what Church did we joyn our ſelves when we left her?

Min. We neither left her, nor went to another, but remain'd as before, a part of *Chriſt's Catholick Church*; only then we were a part of the *Catholick Church*, as included in the *Roman*, and enſlav'd by her; and now a part of it ſtill, as manumitted, and at liberty; then a diſeas'd and infected part, now a part recover'd and reſtor'd to health.

Par. Sir, I thank you heartily; you have given mẽ a very ſatisfactory account of the Nature of the *Catholick Church*, and of the Reformation of ours: And I think I am now well prepar'd to anſwer that common queſtion of the *Romaniſts*, *Where was your Religion before* Luther?

Min. I believe you are: for it's no difficult matter to frame an Anſwer to it from this Diſcourſe; *viz.* 'Twas contain'd in the Writings of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, profeſt in all Chriſtian Churches in all Ages; for ſome hundreds of years, with great purity, and free from mixture; ever ſince, in moſt Churches more or leſs adulterated with droſs and corruptions; but in no Church more than in the *Roman*, and the *Engliſh*, while in ſubjection to the

Roman. So then before *Luther* the Religion we profeſs was in our own Church, tho loaded and obſcured with *Romiſh* Errors and Superſtitions; and we have now no new Religion, nor new Church, but the old Religion, and the old Church reform'd and reſtor'd to its firſt beauty and luſtre.

Par. But is not the meaning of that Queſtion, Where was your Religion, as it's now reform'd, when *Luther* began his Reformation?

Min. In the firſt Ages 'twas in *Paleſtine* and *Greece*, in *Ægypt*, in *Antioch*, and in *Rome* it ſelf, in *Britain*, and in all parts where the unwearied labours, and inceſſant Travels of the Holy Apoſtles carried it: But as for that very time, when *Luther* appear'd, it may be 'twas in the *Greek*, in the *Abaſſine* and *Ægyptian* Churches, amongſt the *Armenian* Chriſtians, who all diſſent from moſt, if not all the *Romiſh* Errors that our Reform'd Church condemns: It may be 'twas in a corner, under a cloud, cover'd with Rubbiſh. What if we ſay, 'twas no where? ſince Chriſt never promis'd, that his Church and Religion ſhould not be corrupted nor perſecuted, but only that it ſhould not fail, nor be deſtroy'd.

Par. You have made it very clear and evident: I gueſs the *Papiſts* cannot give ſo good an account, where their Religion was before the Council of *Trent*? I mean, as it's now conſtituted and determin'd.

Min. Well remembred! 'Tis a good way to turn the Queſtion upon them: For notwithſtanding all their Vaunts and Brags of Succeſſion, Antiquity, and the like; their Additional Articles of Faith in Pope *Pius*'s Creed, are of a very late Date, compar'd

par'd with the Faith of the Engliſh Church as it's now Reform'd; ours is the old Religion, theirs Innovation; ours Ancient, theirs in compariſon but of yeſterday; they added many falſe Doctrines to the Chriſtian Faith; the true Faith that was firſt, and from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, we keep; the falſe Doctrines that have been invented ſince, and added to it by the *Trent*-Fathers, we have left.

Par. Pray, can you tell the preciſe time, and the particular perſons and places, where, and when, and by whom thoſe corruptions of theirs were forged? I perceive they often ask that queſtion when we charge their Religion with novel Inventions.

Min. It's not very material whether we can or no, ſince we are ſure, and can prove them to be groſs corruptions, ſuch as were never taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; The Holy Scriptures are the Charter of our Corporation, they contain the Laws of our Society; We embrace that Faith the firſt Chriſtians did; are in the ſame bottom, and hope to be ſaved with them. Has Chriſt and his Apoſtles any where commanded or tolerated, nay, has he not forbidden *Image-worſhip*, *Invocation of Saints*, *Prayers in an unknown Tongue*? Is it any where ſaid by them, *That the Biſhop of* Rome *ſhall be the Supreme Head of the Church on Earth*? *The Infallible Decider of Controverſies*? *Have power to make new Articles of Faith, and as many as he pleaſes*? *That Penance is a Sacrament*? *That Auricular Confeſſion is neceſſary to Salvation*? If ſome of theſe are forbid, others not to be found in the Sacred Scriptures, Either Chriſt was an imperfect, and a fallible Law-giver, and his Apoſtles unfaithful

ful and treacherous Stewards of the Myſteries of God, or elſe the Chriſtian Faith is whole and entire without them; and they forgeries and novelties invented by evil men to ſerve the ends of Ambition and Covetouſneſs.

Par. I confeſs this Argument is ſufficient, (*viz.* That they are contrary to, or at leaſt, not to be found in the Inſpired Writings) to prove them Errors, were we not able to give an account of their Original and progreſs; for an Error may be an Error, tho' no man knows the firſt Author and Propagator of it? The Tares may be ſowed in the night, and it may not be diſcern'd when and who ſowed them; yet we may know that they are Tares, and that 'twas an enemy too that did it: But I think our learned Proteſtant Writers have trac'd moſt of them back, even to the very time of their birth.

Min. They have ſo, and I'l ſtay a little longer with you, to gratify your curioſity with the diſcovery. The Pope obtained not the title of Univerſal Biſhop till *Boniface* the 3d's time, about 600 years after Chriſt. Tranſubſtantiation was not made an Article of Faith, till the Council of *Lateran*, under *Innocent* the 3d, in the year 1215. The Doctrine of Purgatory got not much footing and credit in the World till about 1140, and the Council of *Trent* firſt ſtampt it an Article of Faith. The Doctrine of Indulgences is a weed that grew up with that of Purgatory, like *Ivy*, twines about it, and lives upon it; but was not grown to any conſiderable height, till *Leo* the 10th's time, when *Luther* ſet up ſo ſtrenuouſly againſt it. They boaſt of the ſecond Council of *Nice*, to juſtify the Antiquity of their Image-

Image-worſhip; but we know the Primitive Church abhorr'd it, ſome of the Fathers condemn'd not only the worſhipping, but the very making of Images; That 'twas not practiſed in the *French*-Church till near 900, nor in *Germany* till after 1200 years. The Council of *Conſtance*, *Anno Dom.* 1418, was the firſt that denied the Cup to the Laity, with an expreſs *notwithſtanding* to the Inſtitution of Chriſt; and the Council of *Florence*, 1439, the firſt that fixt the number of the Seven Sacraments, and made it an Article of Faith. To name no more, The Pope's Supremacy and Infallibility were much oppos'd, never paſt into a Decree, till *Leo* the 10th in a packt Synod at *Lateran*, 1516. contrary to the Decrees of *Conſtance*, *Baſil*, *Bourges* and *Piſa*, got it ordain'd, *That the Pope had Authority over all Councils; and that it was neceſſary to Salvation, that all Chriſtians ſhould be ſubject to him.* In ſum, the *Romiſh* Faith was not, as it is now, till the famous Council of *Trent*, which advanc'd many things into Articles of Faith, that before went only for the ſentiments of particular Doctors, and were believ'd or diſbelieved at pleaſure; But now muſt be believed as neceſſary to Salvation.

Par. I have lately met with the Confeſſion of Faith drawn up at the cloſe of the Council of *Trent*, and confirm'd by the Bull of *Pius* the 4th, *Anno Dom.* 1564. and that indeed ſeems to ſpeak the ſame thing.

Min. It does ſo; After reckoning up the Articles contain'd in the Ancient Creeds, it recites the additional ones of that Council, and then obliges all to give an equal aſſent to them with the former, under pain of damnation. *Par.*

Par. Sir, I am much engag'd to you for this Christian entertainment, and the freedom you have permitted me to take with you; I am satisfied that the Catholick Faith is always the same, and that that profest in our Church is that deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles, held always, and in all places by the Catholick Church; and on the other hand, that that profest in the *Roman* Church is not to be found in the Scriptures, was not the faith of the ancient Primitive Church, was ever and anon oppos'd by some or other of note, even in their own Communion, and not setled as it is now, before the *Trent*-Council: And therefore that ours is the Catholick Faith and not theirs, and consequently our Church, with those that profess the same Faith, the true *Catholick Church*; and that, if theirs be allowed to be a part of it, 'tis for the sake of our Faith which she owns and professes in common with us, and not for her own that she has added, and we condemn.

PART II.

Shewing that the Church of Rome *is not the one* Catholick Church *of Christ.*

Par. SIR. The last time you gave me the freedom to Discourse with you, you said, I remember, That the *Catholick Church* of Christ was made up of all the particular Churches in the World; Pray how come the *Romanists* to say, that their Church is the *Catholick Church*? *Min.*

Min. Becauſe they would have us believe that ſhe is the Miſtreſs of all Churches, and that all ought to be in ſubjection to the Pope as Supreme Head on Earth.

Par. That then is the meaning of ſome of their late Authors, when they ſay, That it is not the particular Dioceſs or Province of *Rome* that they call the *Catholick Church*, but the Church of *Rome*, and all that are join'd in communion with her, and believe as ſhe believes.

Min. Yes, it is ſo: But it's no hard matter to ſhew the weakneſs and falſhood of this Aſſertion.

Par. Before you enter upon that, pray inform me, Do not ſome of the Fathers call the Church of *Rome* the *Catholick Church?* The Papiſts tell us ſo in their Writings.

Min. Yes, they do, and other Churches are call'd ſo as well as the *Roman*, and all by way of diſtinction from Schiſmatical and Heretical Churches: So we read of the *Catholick Church* in *Smyrna*, and the *Catholick Church* in *Alexandria*, and many others might be inſtanc'd in: 'Twas the common Appellation for every Church that held the true Catholick Faith: that is, this is a *Catholick Church*, and this Church, with the others that profeſs the ſame Faith, is the one *Catholick Church.*

Par. Why then the *Roman* Church, provided ſhe held the true Catholick Faith, with all thoſe in communion with her, and that believe as ſhe believes, might be call'd the *Catholick Church?*

Min. Yes, if by *all that believe as ſhe believes*, be limited only to thoſe Articles contain'd in Scripture, and ſumm'd up in the Three Creeds, ſepara-

ted from the many groſs Errors ſhe has added to them, then the Church of *Rome*, and all thoſe others, are the *Catholick Church*: But then this is no more than what may be ſaid of any Church as well as the *Roman*; and the *Engliſh Catholick Church*, with all that hold communion with her, is the one *Catholick Church* of Chriſt on Earth, as well as the *Roman Catholick*.

Par. I perceive you think they mean ſomething more by *believing as ſhe believes*, than the Faith contain'd in the Scriptures.

Min. No doubt they do; they mean thoſe that acknowledg Subjection to her, and believe all at large, what not only the Scriptures, but that Church, pretending to unſcriptural Traditions, declares to be Articles of Faith; *viz.* thoſe Twelve of Pope *Pius* the *4th*; and then the Church of *Rome*, with all that believe as ſhe believes, is not the *Catholick Church*, but very unſound and corrupt parts of it.

Par. Now, Sir, if you pleaſe, I'll tell you what I have met with in their late Authors, to prove the Pope to be Supreme, and that the Church is call'd *Catholick*, by agreeing with that of *Rome*, and yielding Subjection to him.

Min. Do ſo, and I'll give you as plain an Anſwer as I can to them.

Par. They ſay, that Chriſt inveſted St. *Peter* with a paramount power and juriſdiction, not only above, but over all the reſt of the Apoſtles; and that the Pope derives it from him, as being his Succeſſor.

Min. This they ſay, but they cannot prove any thing of it, either that St. *Peter* was Biſhop of *Rome*, or

or had ſuch a power; or if he was Biſhop of *Rome*, and had ſuch a power, that the Pope has an hereditary Right to it.

Par. I have heard it indeed controverted, whether St. *Peter* was ever Biſhop of *Rome*?

Min. The matter will bear very well a Diſpute: for tho' St. *Peter* might be very inſtrumental in founding and building up that Church; yet it is not very likely he was formally a Biſhop of it, it being beneath the Dignity of an Apoſtle, who, as ſuch, was Biſhop of the whole *Catholick Church*, to ſit down for ſome conſiderable time, Biſhop of one part of it: This is ſuch another abſurd degradation of him, as to ſay, the Pope is Rector of ſome little Pariſh.

Par. But certainly they have ſome proof for what they affirm ſo confidently, and on which they lay ſo great a ſtreſs.

Min. Their chief proof is out of *Euſebius*'s Chronicle, where he relates, that *St.* Peter *ſate at* Antioch *Seven years*; *after which he travell'd to* Rome, *where he reſided Five and Twenty years.* But this paſſage is ſuſpected to be put in on deſign, it being left out in *Joſ. Scaliger*'s *Greek* Edition; and indeed ſeems to be contradicted by *Euſebius* himſelf, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*; where he tells us, *that* St. Peter *having preach'd the Goſpel in* Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, *&c. at the laſt, or at the end* (that is) near the approach of his death, *being at* Rome, *was put to death.*

Lug. Bat. 1606.

L. 3. *c.* 1.

Par. I obſerv'd in your reciting the Teſtimony out of *Euſebius*, that St. *Peter* is ſaid to be Biſhop of *Antioch*, before he came to *Rome*: It ſhould ſeem then,

then, that if Succeſſion gives a Right, the Biſhops of *Antioch*, where St. *Peter* was firſt Biſhop, have a better plea for the Supremacy than the Biſhops of *Rome*.

Min. You have inferr'd right: But tho' both be granted, that St. *Peter* was Biſhop of *Rome*, and Succeſſion conveighs a Right, yet neither ſignify any thing, unleſs St. *Peter* himſelf had ſuch a power; for he could not derive upon them what he had not himſelf. Let me therefore hear the proofs you were mentioning the *Romaniſts* bring for St. *Peter*'s Supremacy of Power and Juriſdiction.

Par. The firſt and chiefeſt they urge, is thoſe
Matt. 16. 18. words of our Saviour, *Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* They make a great noiſe about this, and raiſe mighty triumphs upon it.

Min. I know they do; but as great a cry as they make, here is but little wooll; and being conſcious of the weakneſs of the Argument, they would help it out with noiſe and confidence.

Par. But is not, *On this Rock*, to be underſtood of St. *Peter*'s Perſon?

Min. It's very probable, No: For St. *Peter* ſome while after theſe words ſpoken, denied his Maſter, and ſo for a time denied the Faith; and now if the Church be built on him as the foundation, the foundation failing, the Church for that time muſt have failed too, contrary to what our Saviour promiſed, that it ſhould not.

Par. What then is the meaning of it?

Min. One or both theſe Two things: (1.) St.
Verſe 16. *Peter*'s Faith: St. *Peter* having ſaid before, *Thou art Chriſt*,

Chriſt, the Son of the Living God; our Saviour anſwer'd, *Thou art Peter, and on this rock*, on this Faith thou haſt now made profeſſion of, *I will build my Church.* (2.) What our Saviour here ſaid of St. *Peter*, might be ſaid in the name of all the reſt of the Apoſtles; As he made that confeſſion of Faith in the name of them all, ſo this honourable character might be conferr'd on him in the name of all too; and this ſeems the more probable, becauſe the ſame thing, in a manner, is in other places ſaid in common of all of them.

Τῇ πίστει ταύτῃ, τῇ πίστει ὁμολογίας. St. *Chryſ.* in loc.

Unus pro omnibus loquens & Eccleſiæ voce reſpondens, *Cyp.* Ep. 55.

Eph. 2. 20.
Rev. 12. 1.
Rev. 21. 19.

Par. Yet it ſhould ſeem, that ſomething peculiar is in theſe words conferr'd on St. *Peter*: In the foregoing words St. *Peter*'s forwardneſs and zeal to confeſs Chriſt, appear'd above the reſt; *St. Peter anſwer'd and ſaid, Thou art Chriſt*, &c. And therefore why ſhould not ſome particular Badg of Honour be meant in theſe words, to be fixt on him, as the reward of it?

Min. It may be there is; and if any thing, this may be it; That he ſhould have the honour to be the firſt Founder of the Chriſtian Church, both amongſt *Jews* and *Gentiles*; Amongſt the *Jews*, when at one Sermon, St. *Peter* being the firſt and chief Speaker, no leſs than Three Thouſand were converted to the Faith of Chriſt: amongſt the *Gentiles*, when he was commanded by God in a Viſion, to repair to *Cornelius*, and to inſtruct him in the Chriſtian Doctrine, who was the firſt Convert, we read of, to the Faith of Chriſt amongſt the *Gentiles*.

Acts 2. 41.

Acts 10. 1.

Par. You have fully ſatisfied me, that there is no proof in this Text for St. *Peter*'s Supremacy, and con-

conſequently not for the Pope's, if he be his Succeſſor. Will you give me leave to name another Argument of theirs? They tell us, that St. *Peter* is always nam'd *firſt* in the Catalogue of the Apoſtles; and that *firſt* does not there ſignifie firſt in the order of numbring: for then it would have followed, the ſecond, and the third, as the other Apoſtles are named; but it does not: By *firſt* therefore it ſhould ſeem, is meant, a primacy of power and juriſdiction.

Min. 'Tis true, St. *Peter* is always ſet firſt in the Evangeliſts Rolls of the Apoſtles; but he is not ſo in other places of Scripture, where we find ſometimes *James*, ſometimes *Paul* and *Apollo*, and ſometimes *Andrew* numbred before him: But let it be granted, that for the moſt part he is named before the reſt of the Apoſtles, all it can ſignify is this, That upon the account of the eminency of his Faith, the fervour of his zeal in the Cauſe of his Maſter, of his being firſt called to the Apoſtolical Office, a primacy of Order and Honour is due to him; And more than this, a primacy of Power and Juriſdiction, it cannot ſignify, it being ſo plainly contrary to other Scriptures, and thoſe innumerable.

Gal. 2 9.
1 Cor. 3. 22.
Joh. 1. 45.

Par. I was going to deſire you, ſince their Arguments for St. *Peter's* Supremacy are ſo weak, to ſhew how ſtrong our proofs are againſt it.

Min. To give you them briefly; We find our Saviour inveſting all the Apoſtles with equal powers, and deriving on all the ſame miſſion which he himſelf had receiv'd from God; impowering all to Preach, Plant and Propagate the Faith; to feed and rule the Flock of Chriſt, committing the ſame

Joh. 20. 21.

Keys

Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to one as well as another; breathing the ſame Holy Ghoſt on all; forbidding all ambitious attempts amongſt them, who ſhould be greateſt; promiſing indifferently to all Twelve Thrones to ſit upon, judging the Twelve Tribes of *Iſrael*; does not St. *Paul* ſay, *Chriſt ſet in his Church, firſt Apoſtles, ſecondarily Prophets*—? He does not ſay, firſt St. *Peter*, but firſt Apoſtles, all the Apoſtles were firſt. Was not St. *Peter* ſo far from challenging, much leſs exerciſing any ſuch Superiority over the Apoſtles, that we find him ſtiling himſelf their fellow Presbyter, and ſubmitting to the Orders of the Apoſtolick Colledg? Beſides, are not St. *James* and St. *John* ſaid in Scripture to be Pillars, as well as St. *Peter*? Are not the whole Twelve Apoſtles equally ſtiled the Twelve foundations of the New *Jeruſalem*? Does not St. *Paul* challenge an equality with the chiefeſt Apoſtles? And did he not, on occaſion, withſtand St. *Peter* to the face, which he neither ought, nor durſt to have done, had he been his Superior and Lord?

Matt. 19. 28.

1 Pet. 5. 1, 2.

Gal. 2. 7.

Par. The proof is clear and full beyond exception; I ſee plainly the Pope cannot juſtify his Supremacy by virtue of any right, as St. *Peter*'s Succeſſor. But whence had he it then? How came his Holineſs to riſe to this height of Power and Dominion?

Min. The Truth is, how large an Empire ſoever his Holineſs now claims over all other Churches, his Authority, in the beginning, was no greater than that of his Brother Biſhops; the title was the ſame, and *his Holineſs* lay in common to them all:

A Precedence indeed was given him, becauſe he was Biſhop of the Imperial City; Addreſſes were made to him, becauſe he was near the Court and the Royal preſence; Appeals were brought him, becauſe he was powerful, and as able to defend as to determine; And that Church was often made the ſtandard of the Catholick Faith, becauſe for a time it continued pure and uncorrupt, whilſt almoſt all others were overgrown with *Arianiſm* and other Hereſies. But of theſe Honours that were given him, he made advantage to climb higher; from a Priority of place, he ſoon challeng'd a ſuperiority of Power; from being next to the Emperor, he aſpir'd to be next to God; from being an Arbitrator, he ſet up for a Judg; and when he was grown ſo great, that none durſt controul him, he would be an unerring Judg, and grew Infallible.

Par. Theſe, I perceive, were the ſteps of the Papal Pride and Empire; But I have been told, the Pope was beholding to that bloody Regicide *Phocas* for the title of Univerſal Paſtor.

Min. I ſhall ſhew you that preſently; but 'twill not be amiſs here to inform you, That the Pope's challenging a Supremacy of power over the whole Chriſtian Church, is not only contrary to Scripture, but to the Ancient Canons of the Church.

Par. I have heard and read as much in ſome of our own Authors; but pray, which are thoſe Canons?

Min. They are chiefly four; or, if you will, but one, four times repeated and confirm'd, in the firſt Four General Councils ſucceeding one another.

Par. I ſhall be glad to hear them read in order, if you have them at hand.

Min.

Min. I can eaſily gratify you in this matter: The firſt is that famous one, the 6th Canon of the firſt General Council of *Nice*, call'd by *Conſtantine* the Great, *Anno Dom.* 325. which Decreed, That the Biſhop of *Alexandria* ſhall have the ſame power within his Province, as the Biſhop of *Rome* had in his. The words of the Canon are theſe, *Let Ancient Cuſtoms ſtill take place, thoſe that are in* Egypt, Libya *and* Pentapolis, *That the Biſhop of* Alexandria *have power over all theſe; becauſe ſuch alſo is the Cuſtom of the Biſhop of* Rome.

Par. What do you infer from this Canon?

Min. I infer that which is obvious to every eye, *viz.* That the Bp. of *Rome* had not then an Univerſal power over all Chriſtian Churches, ſince the Bp. of *Alexandria* was to exerciſe the ſame juriſdiction in his own Province, as the Bp. of *Rome* did in his.

Par. You'l be pleaſed to go on to recite the other Canons you mention'd?

Min. The ſecond is, the 3d Canon of the 2d General Council held at *Conſtantinople* by the command of *Theodoſius* the Emperor, *Anno Dom.* 380, which Decreed, That *the Bp. of* Conſtantinople, *upon the account of its being new* Rome, *or the Seat of the Empire, ſhould have the priviledg of Honour next to the Bp. of* Rome.

Par. How does this Canon make againſt the Pope's Supremacy?

Min. As it declares what kind of primacy the Bp. of *Rome* had above other Bps, and on what bottom it ſtood; *viz.* a primacy of Honour, or the firſt place; and becauſe *Rome*, of which he was Bp, had been the Imperial City. Now the Council Decreed, That the Bp. of *Conſtantinople* ſhould have the ſame Honour next to him, and for the ſame Reaſon; becauſe *Conſtanti-*

nople was become *New Rome*, That is, the Seat of the Empire was remov'd thither.

Par. You have made this very plain to me; What is the 3d Canon?

Min. It is the 8th Canon of the 3d General Council at *Epheſus*, *Anno Dom.* 431. It runs thus, *Let the ſame courſe be obſerv'd in other Dioceſſes and in all Provinces every where, That none of the holy Biſhops ſeize upon another Province, which was not of old and from the beginning under his power.*

Par. This Canon needs no expoſition, 'tis ſo evident; Pray, What do the *Romaniſts* ſay to it?

Min. Some of them deny it to be a Canon of this Council, and (as they uſually ſerve any thing that is againſt them) have endeavour'd to ſtrike it out from amongſt the Acts of it. Others ſay, it reſpected a particular Caſe, the exemption of the *Cyprian* Bps. from the encroachments of the Patriarch of *Antioch*, who pretended that it belong'd to him to ordain their Metropolitan. Now tho' this be granted, yet the Decree paſſing in general words, without any reſerve for the Bp. of *Rome*, muſt be ſuppoſed to conclude him, as well as any other, to be an ambitious Uſurper, if he claim'd or exercis'd any juriſdiction over any Church, that was not from the beginning under his power.

Par. This is ſo full to the purpoſe, that it may well be the laſt.

Min. Yet I told you there was a fourth; 'Tis the 28th Canon of the 4th General Council Aſſembled at *Chalcedon*, *Anno Dom.* 451, which ordain'd, That *the Bp. of* Conſtantinople *ſhould enjoy equal priviledges with the Bp. of* Rome, there being the ſame reaſon for the one as the other, *Conſtantinople* then being the Imperial Seat, as *Rome* had been.

Par.

Par. I dare ſay the *Romaniſts* do not let this Canon paſs without ſome dirt thrown upon it.

Min. You are a notable gueſſer; ſome ſerve it as they do the forequoted Canon of the General Council of *Epheſus*, leave it out of their Editions of the Councils; others tell the World, That this Council was not free, and the Canon extorted by tumultuous Importunity, when as all the Fathers teſtified their owning of it by their Subſcriptions; others, That it's ſpurious, and put in clandeſtinely; But how then came the Pope's Legats, who were preſent at the Council, ſo vehemently to oppoſe it? Had there been no ſuch Canon, there would have been no need of ſuch an oppoſition. Others, That the Fathers at this Council offer'd the Title of Supreme and Univerſal Paſtor to the Pope; and all, becauſe the perſons delegated by the Pope to inform the Council againſt *Dioſcorus* Patriarch of *Alexandria*, do in their accuſation againſt him, preſume to give their Maſter that glorious title. All are calumnies to beſpatter and bring into diſcredit a Canon that lies ſo heavy upon them and their Cauſe too.

Par. Truly theſe Canons are very plain and manifeſt, and fully prove, not only the right of juriſdiction that every Church has over its own Members, but withal, that the Pope has no right of juriſdiction over all. But I think there is no need of ſuch kind of proof, after ſo expreſs and pregnant an one from Scripture againſt St. *Peter*'s Supremacy over the reſt of the Apoſtles, on which chiefly the Pope's is grounded.

Min. It may be not; But the Church of *England* owning the four firſt General Councils, and often appealing to them, I was willing to let you ſee what they ſay as to this point. Other Canons alſo there are very

Ancient, founded on the Independent power every Church has over thoſe in Communion with her, *forbidding Appeals to be made to forreign and tranſmarine Churches*; requiring, *That no perſon excluded the Communion of one Church, ſhould be receiv'd by another*; But theſe are enough.

Par. Now, you are among the Ancients, you may pleaſe to let me ſee, what other proof there is in Antiquity, That the Biſhops of *Rome* in the firſt Ages had no ſuch extravagant Power and Authority over the Church.

Min. I muſt do it briefly then; The Biſhops of *Rome* began very early to aſpire after it, to diſcover their ambitious inclinations that way; But they were always withſtood, and cenſur'd for it by other Biſhops.

Par. Are there many inſtances of this nature?

Min. Yes, too many; I'll mention ſome few, and ſhall begin with that of Pope *Victor*, *Anno Dom.* 196, who, becauſe the Eaſtern Biſhops would not comply with the cuſtom of the Church of *Rome*, about the time of keeping *Eaſter*, raſhly, and with a Spirit ſavouring too much of pride and arrogance, threw them under the ſentence of Excommunication.

Par. It looks indeed like a very ſevere cenſure on ſo ſmall an occaſion.

Min. 'Twas thought to be ſo then by all good men; The whole Chriſtian World was amaz'd at it, and many eminent perſons, eſpecially that meek and holy Biſhop *Irenæus*, ſharply chid and rebuk'd him for it.

Par. This Inſtance I have often met with in our own Authors.

Min. I'l give you another: 'Twas not long after this, when the Eaſtern Churches, and eſpecially thoſe

in *Africk*, thought it neceſſary that perſons Baptiz'd by Hereticks, ſhould be Baptiz'd anew; *Stephen* then Biſhop of *Rome* was ſo highly diſpleas'd herewith, that he declar'd he would hold no Communion with them, refus'd to ſee and ſpeak with the Biſhops that were deputed to give him an account of their practice, and to ſhew their Reaſons for it; fell foul on St. *Cyprian* Biſhop of *Carthage*, and *Firmilian* Biſhop of *Cæſarea*, and treated both with undecent language on this occaſion.

Par. I wonder how theſe two eminent Biſhops reſented this hard uſage from their Brother-Biſhop?

Min. Very grievouſly; as they had reaſon; both cenſur'd him for it as done out of a proud and arrogant Spirit; and St. *Cyprian* afterwards calling an Aſſembly of Eighty ſeven Biſhops to *Carthage* to debate this point, opened the Synod with a notable Speech, taxing the Biſhop of *Rome* with pride and ambition, ſhewing that no one ought to make himſelf *Biſhop of Biſhops*; that all Biſhops had *equal power* in their reſpective Dioceſſes, and could no more be judg'd by others, than be themſelves Judges of others. Syn. *Carth.* apud *Cypr.* p. 282.

Par. I am glad to hear this account of St. *Cyprian*, becauſe I obſerve the *Romiſh* Authors cite him often on their ſide.

Min. I know they do; and many other Fathers alſo, but with what little reaſon I ſhall ſhew you preſently: However this has brought into my mind, a Saying or two more of St. *Cyprians* to our purpoſe; *The other Apoſtles*, ſaies he, *were indeed that which* Peter *was, endowed with equal Conſortſhip of Honour and Power*; Again, *Our Lord gave to all the Apoſtles after his reſurrection an equal power*, ſaying, *As the Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you.* To the ſame purpoſe St. *Chryſoſtom*, *Cypr.* de Un. Eccl.

St.

Chryſ. in Gal. 2. 8. St. Paul *ſheweth*, ſaith he, *that each Apoſtle did enjoy equal dignity:* And yet more clearly, when comparing in Gal. 1 8. St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* together, he makes St. *Paul* at leaſt equal in Honour to St. *Peter*.

Par. Theſe two Inſtances you have mentioned are very pat to the buſineſs; but I have an imperfect remembrance in my head of ſome Biſhop that took upon himſelf the title of Univerſal Paſtor, and the Biſhop of *Rome* call'd him the forerunner of Antichriſt for it; would you'd pleaſe to give me an account of that Story?

Min. I deſign'd to have done it, had you not mention'd it, and 'tis this; In the year 589. *John* Biſhop of *Conſtantinople*, that he might bear up the better againſt the growing greatneſs of the Biſhops of *Rome*, procur'd for himſelf in a Synod conven'd in that City, about the Cauſe of *Gregory* Biſhop of *Antioch*, the title of Oecumenical or Univerſal Biſhop: But this was ſo paſſionately reſented at *Rome*, that two Biſhops of that See, one after another, *Pelagius* and *Gregory* the Great, loaded the Title with all the names of ignominy and reproach that could be invented; and amongſt others, Greg. lib. 6. Ep. 30. ſtiled it *Deviliſh and Antichriſtian.*

Par. It may be after all this, the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* had no ill deſign in taking the title upon him.

Min. It does not appear that he had; But as the *Roman* Empire was then ſtiled the Univerſe, or the Orbis Romanus. ἡ οἰκουμένη. whole World, and *Conſtantinople* the Imperial Seat; ſo were the Biſhops over the great Churches in that Empire, and eſpecially the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* the greateſt of all, ſtiled Univerſal Biſhops; ſo that it ſhould ſeem the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* took up that great title, only the better to correſpond with the greatneſs

greatneſs of the City o're which he was Biſhop.

Par. Then, the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* took on him that Title rather as a badge of Honour, than any acceſſion of power.

Min. Yes ſurely; For had he deſign'd an unlimited juriſdiction over the whole Church by it, it's not probable that the Eaſtern Patriarchs and Biſhops, that were moſt of them at that Synod, would have conſented to it, and thereby at one caſt have thrown away all their power.

Par. I have been told, it's no unuſual thing in Antiquity, for a particular Biſhop to have the title of Univerſal or Oecumenical Paſtor beſtowed upon him; What may be the reaſon of that?

Min. I ſhewed you this the laſt meeting we had, becauſe every Biſhop is Biſhop of the *Catholick Church*; and tho' for the more advantageous governing of it, each Biſhop has his part particularly to overſee, yet is he in ſome meaſure entruſted with the care of the whole; as the Church is but one, and the Epiſcopal Office one, yet each Biſhop has the whole Epiſcopal power, and is Biſhop of the whole Church.

Par. But if this was all the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* aim'd at by that title, *viz.* greater honour and dignity; calling himſelf the Univerſal Biſhop, as being Biſhop of the Imperial City of the Univerſe; What made the Biſhops of *Rome* ſo to ſtorm at it, as you ſaid they did?

Min. Probably, as may be gathered from the aſpiring temper of ſeveral of the Biſhops of that See, 'twas becauſe they were out-done in their own way, they had been long driving at that title, and another ſtept in before them, and run away with it.

Par.

Par. 'Twas not then, I perceive, the title they ſo much quarrel'd with, as the perſons that wore it; Had the Biſhops of *Rome* had it conferr'd on them by a Synodical Canon, it would have been but a very becoming and graceful title; but they being paſt by, and others crown'd with it, it muſt be proud and ungodly.

Min. I believe you have hit it; That, it's very likely, was the true reaſon of all their ſpleen and bitterneſs; The title of Univerſal Paſtor was foul and abominable only, till the Biſhops of *Rome* could get it ſet on their own heads; for, as much as Pope *Gregory* exclaim'd againſt it, and condemn'd it in the Biſhop of *Conſtantinople*, His immediate Succeſſor but one, Pope *Boniface* the third, got it taken from the See of *Conſtantinople* and affixt to his own of *Rome.*

Par. Here was a quick change indeed from one extream to the other; one Pope with all his might rail'd againſt it, another within Twelve Months with all his ſubtilty courted it; Pray, How came *Boniface* by it?

Min. After the baſeſt and vileſt manner that can be thought of; 'Twas by flattering and courting the moſt execrable *Phocas*, That moſt barbarous Traytor and Murderer, who by embruing his hands in the Blood of his Prince, and butchering his Children before his eyes, poſſeſs'd himſelf of his Crown and Dignity.

Par. Certainly, no Chriſtian, much leſs a Chriſtian Biſhop can be ſuppos'd to fawn on ſuch a Monſter of a Man as this Tyrant and Uſurper is repreſented to be.

Min. Yet no ſooner was this abominable wretch in the Throne, but Pope *Gregory* firſt, and then *Boniface* a little after (*Sabinian* that was Pope betwixt, dying in half a year,) ſooth'd and complemented him at that rate, that one would have thought him to have been a *Conſtantine* or an *Antoninus.*

Par

Par. So then by flattering Applications and wicked Compliances, a grant of it was obtain'd from *Phocas.*

Min. Right: *Phocas* won by the dextrous Addreſſes and fawning Inſinuations of *Boniface*, puts out at laſt an Edict peremptorily requiring, that the Church of *Rome* be ſtil'd and eſteem'd the head of all Churches, and the Pope Univerſal Biſhop.

Par. I perceive they got it baſely, and by the Favour of the baſeſt of men; Have their methods been any better to extend and enlarge their power and dominion?

Min. No ſurely; The Eaſtern Empire ſinking apace by the ſucceſsful Invaſions of the *Saracens*, and the Weſtern much broken by the irruptions of the *Lombards*, the Biſhops of *Rome* ever watchful to ſerve themſelves of all occurrences, took the opportunity while the Emperors hands were full, to play a game for themſelves; and what by the bounty of ſome Princes, particularly of *Pepin* King of *France*, who gave them the Lands his Father *Charles* had won from the *Lombards*; and by the weakneſs and timorouſneſs of others embroil'd in forreign Wars, or diſtracted with Civil Commotions, they have at laſt rais'd themſelves to that height of Power and Authority, as to be able to Lord it over Gods Heritage, and to give Laws, a new Faith, I had almoſt ſaid, a new Goſpel to the Chriſtian World.

Par. Sir, I am very much engag'd to you for this Diſcourſe; you have made it very plain, that the Supremacy of Power and Juriſdiction the Pope claims over all other Churches, is illegal and uſurp'd. But tho' he has not a right of Supremacy over all Churches, he may have over ſome; and they tell us his claim to the Engliſh Church is clear and unqueſtionable.

Min. Not ſo faſt; The things they found their title on, are chiefly theſe two; Archbiſhop *Wilfreds* appealing to *Rome*, *Anno Dom.* 673. and being reſtored by the Popes Sentence; and *Auguſtin* the Monk's coming over hither by the command of *Gregory* the 1ſt to convert the *Saxons*; neither of which can do them any ſervice.

Par. I know nothing of Archbiſhop *Wilfred's* caſe.

Min. 'Twas this in brief; He was a great Pluraliſt, and had engroſt into his power ſo many Benefices, that it became a great ſcandal to Religion: Hereupon King *Alfred* orders him to quit ſome of them; but he refuſing, appeals to the Pope; and tho' the Pope was very much his Friend, and often writ in his favour; yet was he not reſtored, till by his ſubmiſſion and obedience to the Kings Orders, he had made himſelf capable of the Kings favour. You may read this at large in Archbiſhop *Bramhall's Juſt Vindication.* C. 4. p. 6.

Par. Auguſtin the Monk's ſtory I am better acquainted with, and lately read it in the cloſe of the Dean of St. *Paul's Origines Britannicæ.*

Min. There indeed you have it at large, and having read it ſo lately, I need ſay the leſs of it. It's moſt certain, Chriſtianity was planted in this Iſland long before *Auguſtin* the Monk ſet his foot upon it, and that was (as our own Hiſtorian *Gildas* informs us) about the latter end of *Tiberius's* Reign; which ſome make to be five or ſix years before it was planted in *Rome* it ſelf. Who was the firſt founder of the *Britiſh* Church, is not ſo certain; It's enough to our purpoſe that it continued here in the following Ages, a free and an independent Church, govern'd under her own Biſhops, and ſubject to no forreign juriſdiction, having Rites and Uſa-

ges

Uſages of her own, differing from them of the *Romiſh* Church both in the obſervation of *Eaſter*, the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm, and other particulars; a good Argument that ſhe had no dependance on *Rome*, nor owed any ſubjection to her.

Par. But was not Religion at a low ebb when *Auguſtin* the Monk came over? And did not he recover and ſettle it again?

Min. Yes, it was driven up by the Pagan *Saxons* (whom the *Brittains* had call'd in to their aſſiſtance againſt the *Picts* and *Scots*) into a corner with the *Brittains* into *Wales*, and he, as it appears, was very inſtrumental to convert the *Saxons* and reſtore the Goſpel to thoſe parts of the Land where they moſt inhabited: But does this give him, or the Biſhop of *Rome* that ſent him, a Supremacy and Juriſdiction over us? Did the *Brittiſh* Biſhops, ſeven in number, and the Chriſtian Monks that were found here, tamely ſubmit their necks to the *Roman* Yoke? Nothing leſs, They unanimouſly and reſolutely maintain'd the rights of their Church, withſtood his uſurpation, and would acknowledg no ſubjection but to their own Primate and Metropolitan.

Par. You have produc'd many Canons and Teſtimonies from the Fathers againſt the Pope's Supremacy: I ſuppoſe you are not ignorant, what boaſt they make of the Fathers and Antiquity, as if they were all for it, and on their ſide; you have ſeen, I believe, three Pamphlets that came out lately; I think the Titles of them are, *The Succeſſion of the Church and Sacraments*, *Conſenſus Veterum* by *E. S.* and *Nubes teſtium.*

Min. Yes, and I have ſeen all or moſt of them Anſwer'd too before they came out; and as for what con-

cerns the point of Supremacy we have been debating, you will find them fully confuted in two moſt excellent Books; The Dean of St. *Paul's Rational Account*, &c. and Dr. *Barrow's* Treatiſe on the *Pope's Supremacy*. And it may be ſome body or other that has time to ſpare, may think it worth their while to conſider them over again.

Part 2. c. 1. p. 300, 301. &c.

Par. Truly there is no need of it; I have been told they are uſually very tardy in their quotations, That they oftentimes tranſlate wrong, and miſtake the Senſe, and in many of their Books I perceive they give us the *Greek* Fathers in *Latin*: But as they have ſet them down, I do not ſee how they make much for their purpoſe.

Min. Do you perceive that? I am, upon due examination of them, of your opinion; I cannot ſtay to give you a particular account of every teſtimony cited by them; but, as far as I can diſcern, the whole force and ſtrength of them all together may be rank'd and conſider'd under a few general heads.

Par. I like the method very well; and ſo in anſwering one, you anſwer many.

Min. The Heads are theſe: (1.) The great things ſaid of St. *Peter* in the Scriptures and the Ancient Fathers. (2.) The great things ſaid of the Church of *Rome* and the Biſhops thereof. (3.) Communion with the Church of *Rome* being ſometimes made the teſt of a Catholick. (4.) The frequent Appeals made to that Church and the Biſhops thereof. (5.) The Antiquity and uninterrupted Succeſſion of that Church.

Par. I believe you have done them right; Theſe ſeem to contain the main of their ſtrength; and I believe you are able to do them right too in the anſwering them.

Min.

Min. I muſt confeſs 'tis no hard matter for a Man to confute a witneſs that is not againſt him; for theſe are ſuch. As for the (1.) The great things ſaid of St. *Peter* in the Scriptures and the Ancient Fathers, *viz.* where he's call'd, *the Ambaſſador, Steward or Miniſter of Chriſt, a Rock on which the Church is founded,* where *the Keys of the Church are committed to him, and a power given him of binding and looſing,* and where *he's commanded to feed the flock*; where he's ſtiled the *Head,* the *Prince,* the *Captain,* the *Preſident of the Apoſtles*; To this the Anſwer is ready and full; the ſame things ſaid of him in Scripture, are therein ſaid alſo of all the Apoſtles; And if not the ſame, yet as great things are ſaid of the reſt of the Apoſtles, by the Ancients, as of him: After all, we yield that theſe magnificent titles denote ſomething of Honour peculiar to him, not a Supremacy, but a Primacy; not an Authority, but a Precedence: not a Dominion, but a Dignity.

2 Cor. 5. 20. Eph. 2. 20. Eph. 4. 11.

Par. As for the (2d.) The great things ſpoken of the Church of *Rome* and the Biſhops thereof; *viz.* That She's the *Apoſtolick See,* the *Prerogative of the Apoſtles Chair,* the *Principal Church,* and the *more powerful Principality,* and the like, I will not trouble you for an Anſwer, I have heard it often given, and I think it ſatisfactory.

Min. I ſuppoſe you mean, becauſe *Rome* was the Imperial Seat, and upon that account was that Church, and the Biſhop of it in power, and riches and intereſt, in rank, and ſplendor, and dependences, much ſuperior to all others.

Par. Yes, I mean that; and for the ſame reaſon, when the Seat of the Empire was tranſlated to *Conſtantinople,* did that See ſet up to vie with the *Roman,* and

and had an equality of Honour conferr'd upon Her.

Min. There may yet be another reaſon given of it; *viz.* Becauſe the *Roman* Church was founded by thoſe two moſt eminent Apoſtles, St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, (tho' neither the one nor the other, it may be, was formally Biſhop of it) Now out of love and honour to their memories might the Ancients ſpeak ſo many big and ſwelling things of the Church planted by them, and of its Biſhops.

Par. I had gotten over this Stile pretty well without your help; but I think the (3d) particular is not ſo eaſy; Pray, Why was the Faith of the Church of *Rome* made the teſt of Catholiciſm, and Communion with that Church, of Catholicks?

Min. Had you been never ſo little converſant in Church Hiſtory, this would as little have puzl'd you as the other; 'Twas becauſe the Church of *Rome* kept her ſelf, for ſome conſiderable time longer, pure and untainted, whileſt moſt of the Eaſtern Churches were more or leſs defil'd with Hereſy: Here was the true ſolid Grain growing without the mixtures of the *Arian* Tares; and therefore to Her did the Fathers in their Diſputes with Hereticks and Schiſmaticks frequently Appeal, as a true *Catholick Church*, that ſtill held the true Catholick Faith; But becauſe ſhe was once a chaſt and undefil'd Church, does it follow that ſhe muſt be always ſo? Moſt certainly the Church of *Rome* has been ſo chang'd and alter'd ſince, ſo diſeas'd and deform'd, that ſhe cannot be known to be her ſelf.

Par. I think they lay a great ſtreſs upon the (4th) Head, The frequent Appeals that have been made to that Church.

Min.

Min. They have little reaſon ſo to do; for all the Appeals (till the after encroachments and uſurpations of that See) that were made to the Pope, were not, as to a Governor ſet over all, who by his Authority could command juſtice to be done, (which the Fathers, and St. *Cyprian* particularly ſo often and zealouſly declaim againſt) but as to a Brother and a Friend of Innocence, that was moſt able to afford relief and ſuccour to the injur'd and oppreſs'd: They did not Appeal to his Bar to right them, but ſued to his kindneſs, to own them and their Cauſe. Of ſo great power and intereſt was the Biſhop of that Church, by reaſon of his nearneſs to the Court, and his reſidence in that wealthy and populous City, that every one was ready to court him, and on every occaſion to fly to his Patronage, knowing well, which ſide he took would go far to weigh down the ballance: But at firſt, whenever he thought fit to interpoſe, it was in the nature of a Friend, and not as a Judge; by way of Counſel and Advice, and not of Sentence and Judgment.

Par. The laſt Head you mention'd they cite the Fathers for, is the Antiquity and uninterrupted Succeſſion of the Church of *Rome*; But I confeſs I am to ſeek how Succeſſion and Antiquity can give Supremacy.

Min. So am I too; It's true, the Ancients in their Diſputes with Schiſmaticks, eſpecially the *Donatiſts*, ſometimes made uſe of this Argument againſt them, That they were but, as it were, of yeſterday, and could derive no Succeſſion from the Apoſtles; whereas the Orthodox Churches were of long ſtanding, and they could trace their Biſhops backward from one to another, till they came to the firſt Founder and Planter of them; and becauſe the Church of *Rome* was, at the time

time of the *Donatiſts*, the moſt clear and uninterrupted in this point of Succeſſion, they were wont to inſtance in Her particularly; but ſuppoſing the Church of *Rome* was now the only Church that could ſhew a Succeſſion, (as ſhe is not, for the *Greek* Church and the *Brittiſh* Church can ſhew it as well as ſhe) How does Succeſſion prove the Pope's Supremacy? or the want of it prove a Church, no Church? May not a Man be acknowledg'd to be a true Son of *Adam*, tho' he cannot name all his progenitors that came betwixt?

Par. It may be it is, becauſe that Church is yet in being, and God has promis'd that his Church ſhall never fail.

Min. But becauſe ſhe is not yet deſtroyed, does it follow ſhe never ſhall be? It is an evident demonſtration indeed of the wonderful patience and forbearance of God towards a very degenerate and deprav'd Church, but can be no Argument for the goodneſs of a Church, or for the perpetual duration of it.

Par. Sir, I think you have omitted one thing which they plead, and then I ſhall eaſe you of your trouble; Some of the Fathers, St. *Cyprian* eſpecially, ſtile the See of *Rome*, *The Chair of St.* Peter, and tell us, that that *Chair is but one, and from it ſprang the unity of the Prieſthood*; How are theſe expreſſions to be underſtood?

Min. I thank you for putting me in mind of it; They are *Optatus*'s words as well as St. *Cyprian*'s; and the true ſenſe of them is this; That as the Epiſcopal Office is but one, and the whole power of it put into the hands of every Biſhop, ſo each Church had but one Bp. or one Epiſcopal Chair, the better to preſerve Unity, and this was the original or fountain of Prieſthood,

Opt. Mil. l. 2. adv. *Parm.* *Cypr.* Ep. 55. ad *Cornel.*

to

to all the Clergy within its juriſdiction; ſuch was *Rome* the one Chair of St. *Peter*, tho' that Church was founded by St. *Paul* alſo, yet for unity ſake, only one Epiſcopal Chair was ſet up, and one Epiſcopal Succeſſion preſerv'd, and from it the unity of the Prieſthood was derived into all parts within that See or Patriarchate.

Par. I perceive you limit thoſe words, *from whence the unity of the Prieſthood firſt began*, to thoſe places within the Biſhop of *Rome*'s Juriſdiction.

Min. Polydore Virgil does ſo; for, ſays he, it's very clear that Prieſthood was orderly appointed at *Jeruſalem*, long before St. *Peter* came to *Rome*. The younger Siſter may have the better fortune, become the more honourable, and take place of the Elder, but ſhe cannot make her ſelf born firſt, and of the longeſt ſtanding. There being Churches compleatly formed, before the *Roman* was in being, ſhe could not be the original of Prieſthood to them; But by many Accidental advantages growing the greateſt and the richeſt Church, ſhe became the firſt too; and this Primacy of Honour and Dignity was at that time, and for that reaſon readily yielded to Her by the elder Churches. So that the Prieſthood which is but one, may be ſaid to begin firſt at *Rome*, for the ſame reaſon that the *Roman* is call'd the firſt Church, in regard of the dignity of it, as being the principal member of Chriſt's Church Catholick; but yet there may be a firſt amongſt equals, and a Man may be above Thouſands in honour and dignity, over whom he has no abſolute command or power. Lib. 4. de Invent. Rerum.

PART III.

Shewing that the Scriptures, and not the Church, are the Rule of Faith.

Par. SIR, I think your Diſcouſe the other day made it very plain, That the Church of *Rome* is not the *Catholick Church*. Pray, What Church do the *Romaniſts* mean, when they ſay that the Church is the Rule of Faith?

Min. They mean their own particular Church, and call it the Catholick: But you have heard upon what grounds we deny it, and I am glad they appear'd clear and convincing to you.

Par. I fancy, if you will not allow their Church to be the *Catholick Church*, their Zeal will not be ſo hot for the Church's being the *Unerring Oracle of Truth*, and *Infallible Decider of Controverſies*.

Min. I am of your mind; for in my Conſcience the Holy *Catholick Church* in all Ages, eſpecially in the firſt, that were neareſt the Fountain of Truth, and ſo could beſt diſcern truth from falſhood, never held the ſame Faith and Doctrine that the Church of *Rome* does now.

Par. But taking the Church to be meant of the True *Catholick Church* of Chriſt; Is ſhe to be admitted to be the Rule of Faith?

Min. No, We have, as we ought, a very great veneration for Her, and pay all due deference to her judgment, and are confirm'd in the Faith by the Teſtimony and Witneſs ſhe bears to it; but the Rule ſhe judg'd

judg'd by was, the Doctrine of Christ by Gods appointment committed to Writing, and that must be ours: And if not the *Catholick Church*, much less the Church of *Rome*, which I have shewn is but one part of it, and that a very corrupt part too.

Par. But this being the Foundation on which the whole Fabrick of their Religion is built, methinks they should be able to say a great deal for it.

Min. What that is, I shall endeavour to shew you, and at the same time shew you the weakness of it; But before we enter upon that, 'twill not be amiss that we fix the terms of the Question.

Par. If you please. But I think there is no great difficulty in that; By *Faith*, I suppose, is meant the Belief of the whole Christian Doctrine reveal'd by Christ to his Apostles, and by them deliver'd to us: And by *Rule*, that thing, whereby we know what is the Christian Doctrine, and what is not.

Min. You have express'd it well enough; Now this Rule, the *Reform'd* say, is the Scriptures only; *The Romanists*, the Church.

Par. How may the Scriptures be prov'd to be the compleat and only Rule of Faith?

Min. Indeed, 'tis so plain, it needs no proof; and I am sure you have no doubt of it. 'Tis manifest from their own testimony, and there are many collateral proofs besides. What did the Primitive Christians preserve with more care, than these Divine Writings? What did their Persecutors more industriously seek to destroy, than the *Bible*? What was reckon'd a clearer sign of a false Christian, than to deliver up this Book to be burnt? Did not Believers in those times count it a delivering up their Religion? Did they not brand

Traditores thoſe with the odious name of Betrayers of their Religion, that did it? Have not the Doctors of the Church in all Ages appeal'd to this for the Truth of their Doctrine? Have they not, with this *Sword of the Spirit*, encountred all the Errors and Hereſies that ſprung up in the Church? And did they not ever account it a main part of their Office and Function to expound and apply it to the people? All which put together, ſeem to be a clear and full evidence, That the Scriptures contain in them the full Will of God concerning the Salvation of Man.

Par. But theſe you ſaid were not the main Arguments, but only, like ſo many ſupernumerary Auxiliaries, of which there were no need. You were mentioning ſome others?

Min. I was ſo; And they are taken from the Scriptures themſelves, and the joint concurrent teſtimony of the *Catholick Church.*

Par. I think, tho' the *Papiſts* will not grant the Scriptures to contain the whole Will of God, yet they own them to be the Word of God; and therefore an Argument from thence will be of as great force to them as to us.

Min. It ought to be ſo; And can any thing be clearer than theſe two Texts to this purpoſe; *Joh.* 20. 30, 31. *Theſe things are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.* 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16, 17. *And that from a child thou haſt known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus; All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs,*

that

that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Par. These are very plain, and nothing needed to be said after them; but because they boast so much of Antiquity and Tradition, you may please to shew what they speak for us in this point.

Min. You must not expect that I should produce all the Testimonies of the Ancients to this purpose. Many of our Learned men have done it to my hand; and I wish you'd give me leave to refer you to two great men indeed, who have done this work throughly, and beyond contradiction: Dr. *Tillot. Rule of Faith*, Part 4. Sect. 2. and Dr. *Still. Rational Account*, Part 1. Chap. 11. p. 261.

Par. However you may please to give a tast of one or two.

Min. I will then; and they shall be of those who liv'd near, or not far remote from the Apostolical times; And we shall find all of them fix on the Scripture, and not one mention the Infallible Testimony of the Church, much less the *Roman*, as the only ground whereinto Faith is to be resolv'd: *Irenæus* tells us, That the Scriptures are perfect, as spoken from the Word of God and his Spirit; and that they are the Foundation and Pillar of our Faith. *Tertullian*, writing against *Hermogenes* the Heretick, who asserted that all things at the beginning were made of some subject matter, hath these words, *Let those of* Hermogenes *his Shop shew that it is written: If it be not written, let them fear that woe which is allotted to such as add or take away.* And in the same place makes this profession for himself, *I adore the fulness of the Scripture.* St. *Basil* is also full to this purpose, *It is a manifest falling*

Lib. 2. c. 47. l. 3. c. 1.

Tertul. ad Ferm. c. 22.

Adoro Scripturæ plenitudinem.

Basil. ἐπιστέως. tom. 2. *Greg. N.* de An. & Resu. tom. 2. p. 639. *Cl. Alex.* Strom. 2.

ing from the Faith, saith he, *either to reject any of those points that are written, or to bring in any of those things that are not written.* St. *Gregory Nysene, In that only the Truth must be acknowledged, wherein the Seal of the Scripture Testimony is to be seen. Clemens Alexandrinus* calls the consent of the *Old* and *New Testament, The Ecclesiastical Canon*, and *the Touchstone of True and False.* St. *Chrysostome, The most exact Balance, Square and Rule of Divine Verity. Vincentius Lirinensis*, saith, That *the Canon or Rule of Scripture is perfect, abundantly sufficient in it self for all things; yea, more than sufficient.* These may suffice, as you desir'd, for a tast; I have referr'd you, where you may have a more perfect Account.

St. *Chrys. Hom.* 13. in 2. Ep. ad Cor. *Vin. Lir.* satis superque sufficiat. Cont. hær. c. 2.

Par. I see plainly both Scripture and Antiquity give it for the Written Word to be the Rule of Faith; Pray, upon what account do the *Papists* attribute it to the Church?

Min. Upon this twofold Account; both as, they pretend, she is the only safe *Repository* and *Conservator* of certain unwritten Traditions concerning this Faith, and the only sure and *Infallible Interpreter* of those that are written.

Par. Do they wholly exclude the Scripture?

Min. No, not in words, but in effect they do; They make it but an obscure part of the Rule; Tradition is to supply its deficiency, and the Interpretation of the Church, its obscurity.

Regula fidei non totalis sed partialis. *Bell.* lib. 4. c. 12. de verbo non Scripto.

Par. What do they mean by their unwritten Traditions?

Min. Certain Doctrines and Articles of Faith deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles, that were never committed to writing, but left in the Custody of the Church,

to

to be transmitted to Posterity by word of Mouth; And these, the Council of *Trent* ordains *to be receiv'd with the same Religious reverence and affection, as we do the Scriptures themselves.* Sess. 4. decr. 1.

Par. But does not the Apostle exhort the *Thessalonians, to hold the Traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or writing,* 1 Thess. 2. 15.

Min. The Scriptures then might not be all written, The Apostles being all or many of them living: St. *Paul* had taught the *Thessalonians* before, many necessary Truths, which he did not mention in this Epistle; but they being sure that all proceeded from the same Infallible Spirit that was in him, the one was equally to be held fast, and adher'd to with the other: The whole Christian Doctrine, when first Preach'd by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles, was unwritten; some parts of it were written before others, and some Churches had them before others; but it was not long before the whole was compleatly written and deliver'd to all.

Par. It seems indeed, Had not God been pleas'd to have order'd the whole Christian Doctrine to be put into Writing, we should not at this distance have been at so great a certainty, what is Gospel, and what not.

Min. At so great a certainty, say you? We should have been at a great loss, and the whole Doctrine of the Gospel endanger'd by multitudes of Novelties and pretended Apostolical Traditions. The Devil very early put men upon this Trade, first to broach new Doctrines, and then (to gain credit and reputation to them) to entitle them to some Apostolical Men or other, that were contemporaries with the Apostles, or liv'd not long after them.

Par.

Par. Can you produce any Inſtances of this kind? Did this way of corrupting the Faith begin ſo ſoon?

Min. Yes truly, The Apoſtles were ſcarce cold in their Graves, when another Doctrine, than what they Preach'd, was publiſh'd and father'd upon them; and had not the *true* been committed to Writing, in all likelihood, without the extraordinary Mercy of God, it had long before now been loſt and buried under heaps of Traditionary Forgeries: How ſoon did the *Milleſary* Opinion ſpring up? how faſt did it grow and ſpread, and how long continue? *Papias* affirming he had it from thoſe who convers'd with the Apoſtles. What a mighty difference was there betwixt the Eaſtern and Weſtern Churches about the time of keeping *Eaſter*, whilſt each pretended an Apoſtolical Tradition for their own Cuſtom? Others there were about the time our Saviour lived, and about the time of his publick Miniſtry; but theſe are enough to ſhew, That if Unwritten Doctrines were ſo ſoon after the Apoſtles death laid at their doors, that were none of theirs, what little credit and truſt is to be given to thoſe that have been invented ſince, even in theſe latter Ages, and attributed to them?

Par. But do the Reform'd reject all Traditions whatſoever?

Min. No. All the moſt Learned of the Reform'd, and particularly thoſe of the Church of *England*, have a great veneration for what is truely Primitive and Ancient, and held by the *Catholick Church* in the firſt Ages; whether they be expoſitions of Scripture, Symbols of Faith, Devotional Hymns, Forms of Prayer, or Decrees of Councils that were free and Oecumenical, for the ending of Controverſies in matters of Faith,

Faith, or Eſtabliſhing Rites and Ceremonies for the more decent and orderly management of Eccleſiaſtical affairs.

Par. I ſuppoſe every thing, that by evident reaſon may be drawn from Scripture, tho' not expreſs'd in it, that's not contrary to it, and what neither in its nature nor conſequence tends to corrupt the true Catholick Faith.

Min. Yes, every Tradition of that nature; and there is great reaſon we ſhould have reſpect to ſuch; for when we ſee how the Fathers expounded Scripture at the beginning, and what were the Articles of their Faith, it cannot but be a great ſtrengthening and confirmation of ours; and the Orders and Canons left by them, are ſo many helps and directions to Governors in ſucceeding Ages, what they may, and what they ought to do to preſerve the Faith and the Unity of the Church.

Par. I perceive you limit the Traditions you allow of, to thoſe of the whole *Catholick Church*, and eſpecially to that in the firſt Ages.

Min. I do ſo, and thoſe we contend for more earneſtly than the *Romaniſts* do; they confirm us in many of our own Doctrines, which, tho' they may be gathered out of Scripture, yet are not laid down there in ſo many words; ſuch as Infant-Baptiſm and the Divine Right of Epiſcopal Authority above *Presbyters*; and they confirm us againſt many of the Church of *Rome*'s, which, as they have no Foundation in Scripture, ſo have not the leaſt countenance from Primitive Traditions, as, I think, was made evident at our laſt meeting, in the point of the Pope's Supremacy.

Par. Are all others then to be ſuſpected, whether their Authors be private Doctors or particular Churches?

Min. Yes, to be ſuſpected, but not preſently to be condemn'd without Examination; ſo far as their Traditions agree with the Written Word, and thoſe of the *Catholick Church*, we approve of them; but then 'tis not for any virtue derived on them from the Authority of their reſpective Authors, but for their own ſake, and the ſake of the Scriptures to which they are conformable; but if they have not the Ancient Catholick Stamp and Image upon them, they are to be diſown'd as Illegitimate, and to be caſt out; and of this ſort ſeem to be thoſe additional *Trent*-Doctrines, invented by particular men to ſerve a turn, to promote the Intereſts of that Church, and then Eſpous'd and Adopted by the Church as Catholick, and impoſed on the World in a blind undiſcerning Age as ſuch.

Par. This ſeems to be a ſevere charge, but I ſuppoſe you ſpeak not without grounds.

Min. You may be ſure of it; for they are certainly ſuch as contradict the Scriptures, which they own to be the word of God equally with their Traditions; and therefore both cannot be true; the Chriſtian Verity is but one, and cannot be contrary to it ſelf; either the Scriptures or their Traditions are miſtaken, and muſt be rejected.

Par. But, they ſay, we take the Scriptures upon the credit of the *Roman* Church, and why then do we ſo clamorouſly cry down their Traditions; may they not be believed in one thing as well as another?

Min.

Min. That's a very great miſtake; 'tis upon the Credit of the whole Church of Chriſt, that we receive and embrace them, whereof the *Roman* Church is but a part; they were committed at firſt to every particular Church in the World to be carefully preſerv'd, that they might neither be corrupted nor loſt; and we have the ſuffrage of all and every one of them for the Canon of it; unleſs we can think that all the Churches in the World could conſpire to impoſe upon us, we are ſafe; and upon confidence they did not, we receive them: let them ſhew us the ſame concurrent Teſtimony of the *Catholick Church* for their Traditions, and we'll receive them too.

Par. 'Twas then the *Catholick Church* that made the Canon of Scripture.

Min. You muſt take me right. 'Tis not the Authority of the Church that gives the Scripture its Authority, but the Divine and inſpired Authority whence they proceeded; knowing them to have been indited by the Holy Spirit in Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and finding by comparing the ſeveral Copies lodg'd in the keeping of the ſeveral Churches, how exactly they did anſwer to, and agree with one another, ſhe declar'd them to be Canonical, and bore witneſs to their Divine authority.

Par. However the Church of *Rome* was one that gave in her Teſtimony for the Canon of the Scripture.

Min. Yes, but, we have reaſon to bleſs God, ſhe was not the only one that was the Keeper of the Divine Writings; ſhe has ſo corrupted them ſince, men would have been apt to have ſuſpected, ſhe had forg'd them at firſt; ſhe has not only added many A-

pocryphal Books to the Holy Canon, but ſo abuſed the Canonical, that we muſt ceaſe to wonder at their Religion being different from ours, ſince their Bible is not the ſame.

Par. I hope you do not ſpeak this without Book; one would be ſure of it before he lays ſo great a crime to their charge.

Min. You ſhall judg of it your ſelf, in *Gen.* 3. 15. that they might force the Text to give ſome countenance to that extravagant Honour and Worſhip they pay to the Bleſſed Virgin, inſtead of *that* or *he*, they Tranſlate *ſhe ſhall break thy head.* Learned men well know how full of Errors the vulgar *Latin* Edition is, and yet the *Trent*-Council made it the only Authentick one, and ſome of that Communion priſe it above the Original; who can compare the two Bibles put out by thoſe two Popes not long after one another, Pope *Sixtus* the *5th*, and Pope *Clement* the *8th*, each duly Authoriz'd by each Pope, with a curſe to every one that ſhould uſe any other, and not perceive the many corruptions of both, and the palpable contradictions in each to one another.

Dr. *Jam. Bell* Papal.

Par. I did not know before, that they had thus ſerv'd the Bible, but I have often heard how bold they have made with the Writings of the Fathers; a late ingenious Author hath told us what they have done to St. *Chryſoſtom*'s Epiſt. to *Cæſarius* for being againſt their Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation.*

Min. It's very true, Some of the *Sorbonn* Doctors cut it out of the *Greek* Edition of *Palladius*, publiſhed by Monſieur *Bigot*, 1680. The very original Leaves, as they were ras'd out, are in the hands of a Learned man I could name to you. I muſt not ſtay to ſhew you,

you, what ſpurious Treatiſes have been compos'd by them, and father'd upon men of Name and Antiquity; How they have put the genuine works of many of the Fathers into the Inquiſition, and rack'd and tortur'd them to ſpeak on their ſide. How in ſome places Sentences have been foiſted in; in others, Paſſages left out, Words chang'd, and Points alter'd, and all to eſtabliſh and ſpread the Papal Pride and Uſurpation: Inſtances of every particular hereof, more than a few, are to be found in Dr. *James*'s learned Treatiſe of the *Corruption of Scripture, Fathers and Councils.*

Par. I have heard that Book often mention'd, but never ſaw it; Pray, Is it in Engliſh? And what's the deſign of it?

Min. It is in Engliſh, and a very uſeful Book: He gives us an account of no leſs than 187 Treatiſes that have been forg'd by *Papiſts*, and ſcatter'd abroad under the names of the Ancient Fathers; turns us to no leſs than 50 places of the True Fathers that have been corrupted by them; ſhews us the infinite wrong their *Indices Expurgatorii* have done to innumerable Authors both Ancient and Modern, not ſparing the very *Bible* it ſelf.

Par. I think you have made it very evident, That the Church, upon the account of her Traditions, is not the Rule of Faith; and truly after all the noiſe the Church of *Rome* makes about them, ſhe does not, as I have been told, think fit to ſtick to it her ſelf.

Min. It's true, there have been ſo many claſhes and fallings out betwixt their Apoſtolical Traditions, that to keep peace amongſt them, they are forc'd to fly to the judgment of the preſent Church, to determine which is the true Child, and which the counterfeit. *Dipping*

the

the perſon three times in Baptiſm, in ſignification of the Bleſſed Trinity, Giving the Euchariſt to Infants, Adminiſtring Baptiſm only at Eaſter *and* Whitſuntide, were once eſteemed Ancient and Apoſtolical Traditions; now in as little uſe amongſt them, as amongſt us. The Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* for near 400 years together was rejected by them, tho' now for a much longer time it has been receiv'd as Canonical. Pope *Gelaſius* call'd it a Grand Sacriledg to deny the Cup to the Laity; The Council of *Trent* now Anathematiſes thoſe that hold it neceſſary: Pope *Gregory* condemn'd the Title of *Univerſal Paſtor* as Antichriſtian; Pope *Boniface* the 3*d* as greedily catcht at it, and all his Succeſſors glory in it, as the top and flower of the Papal Dignity.

St. *Jerom* in *Iſai.* c. 6. 8. *Gratian.* de Conſecr. diſt. 2. cap. 2.

Par. Then they do with their Traditions as they do with the Scriptures, put what ſenſe they pleaſe upon them, and neither the one nor the other ſignifies any thing, till the Church has firſt Catechiz'd them, and taught them what to ſay.

Min. 'Tis juſt ſo; When all is done; tho' for the better grace of the thing, they may pretend great regard to Scripture and Tradition in what they hold for Articles of Faith; the Definition of the Church, which they muſt have Infallible, is with them the only and whole Rule, and all their Faith is built on that Foundation.

Par. What do they mean by the Church, to which they attribute ſuch an Infallible Spirit? In what part of the Church do they place it?

Min. Truly, you muſt not expect that I ſhould tell you this, for they cannot tell themſelves; ſometimes 'tis in the Church Virtual, the Pope, the viſible head of it; ſometimes in the Church Repreſentative, a General Council; ſometimes in both, a Council with the Pope pre-

preſiding in it. The truth is, 'tis with the Pope and a General Council, *catch as catch can*; ſometimes the one, and ſometimes the other has been uppermoſt, according as the Pope's Power and Intereſt was in the full or wane: The Council of *Conſtance* decreed in favour of a General Council, the Council of *Lateran*, in favour of the Pope; both have had their turns, and both have their parties and abettors.

Par. Were I a *Romaniſt*, I ſhould be for the Pope; I deſire to be excuſed from naming all my Reaſons; But why ſhould not this be thought a good one? Is it not reaſonable to lodge the Infallibility where they fix the Supremacy? For his Holineſs cannot but know that his Supremacy is clipt, whilſt the judgment of one or many together, is to be taken and preferr'd before his.

Min. There is ſomething in what you ſay; but ſo many Popes have been ſuch ignorant and lewd perſons, ſome guilty of Hereſy, ſome of Atheiſm, ſome of Debauchery, as might be inſtanc'd in *Liberius*, *Vigilius*, *Honorius*, *Adrian*, *Hildebrand*, and others; that all of them have not the face to ſay, Popes cannot err, who have actually err'd in a very high degree ſo often; They have therefore compounded the matter, eſpecially their late Authors, and have plac'd it in the Definitions and Decrees of a General Council, confirm'd and ratified by the Pope.

Par. But have not General Councils contradicted one another as well as Popes?

Min. They muſt confeſs this too; The 7th General Council of *Conſtantinople*, held in the year of our Lord 755, and in the 13th year of *Conſtantine Copronimus*, whereat were preſent 338 Biſhops, condemn'd the uſe of Images in Churches *on any account whatſoever*, as

as a Cuſtom borrow'd from the Pagans, juſtifies her Decree both from Scripture, Reaſon, and Ancient Fathers, amongſt whom, *Euſebius Pamphili's* Epiſtle to *Conſtantia* the Empreſs, deſiring the Image of Chriſt to be ſent her, is moſt worthy our notice and obſervation.

Hiſt. Mag. cent. 8. c. 9. *What Image of Chriſt do you mean? Of his Divine Nature? That cannot be had: As no Man knoweth the Father but the Son, ſo no Man knoweth the Son but the Father. Of his Human Nature? Underſtand, That the ſplendor and ſhining brightneſs of his glorified Body, cannot be repreſented with dead Colours and ſhining Pictures.* But the ſecond Council of *Nice*, about 33 years after, In the 8th year of the Reign of *Irene* and her Son *Conſtantine*, conſiſting of 350 Bps. with as much zeal determin'd for *Images*, not only that they ſhould be receiv'd into Churches, but be *adored and worſhipped* there. To this Council did *Adrian* Bp. of *Rome* ſend an Epiſtle, approving the *Worſhip of Images*; and ſeveral Bps. that had condemn'd them in the Council of *Conſtantinople*, here recanted their Opinion, and beg'd pardon.

Par. I remember you ſhewed me before, how the Decrees of the Council of *Conſtance* and *Lateran* were at Sword-pike with one another, in the point of *Supremacy*.

Min. I did ſo; and I was going on to ſhew you a farther repugnancy of one Council to another, in the point of *Image-worſhip*; The great Council at *Frankford*, held under *Charles* the Great, King of *France*, in the year of our Lord 794, ſeconded that of *Conſtantinople* againſt *Images*, and that too, in ſpight of Pope *Adrian's* Ambaſſadors, whom he ſent on purpoſe to defend them; But the Council comparing the Acts of the Council of *Conſtantinople* and *Nice* together, went a middle way, and

and whilſt it allow'd Images and Pictures in Churches for Decency and Ornament, it ſtrictly forbid all Worſhip and Veneration of them as impious, and againſt the Law of God. In this Council all the Arguments brought by the 2d Council of *Nice* for the Adoration of Images, are fully refuted, and *Epiphanius*'s Epiſtle to *John* Bp. of *Jeruſalem*, diſallowing the very bringing in of Images into Churches, was recited; but whatever was ſaid and urg'd therein againſt them, the *Trent*-Fathers when they came, over-rul'd all, and the Council of *Frankford* did not pull them down with more reaſon than that Council ſet them up again with violence, denouncing an Anathema againſt all that dare refuſe to pay Worſhip and Veneration to them.

Par. Where muſt the Infallibility be now? Methinks they ſhould be aſham'd to pretend to it.

Min. They beg your pardon for that; as a great man hath worded it, *They are ſure they have it, tho' they know not where to find it.*

Par. Pray, Sir, ſince they will not let this Doctrine go, what do they alledg in behalf of it?

Min. They force many places of Scripture to ſpeak in its cauſe; they pretend an abſolute neceſſity for it for many good purpoſes, *viz.* in order to the finding out the true ſenſe of Scripture, to the preſerving peace and unity, and to the preventing ſchiſms and diviſions, errors and hereſies in the Church.

Par. I remember, they cite all thoſe places for it, where a power is ſaid to be given to the Church *to forgive ſins*, where the Miniſters of the Goſpel are call'd *God's Husbandmen*, *Labourers*, *Building*, are ſaid to have *the mind of Chriſt.*

Min. But he muſt have a piercing eye that can diſcern the Infallibility of the Church in theſe Texts; but ſuppoſe it might be proved from hence, what reaſon has the Church of *Rome* to Engroſs and Monopopolize them to her ſelf?

Par. It's obvious that they are ſpoke in general, and ſo concern one part of the Church as well as another; but I ſuppoſe they have other Texts in ſtore, that ſeem to be more expreſs and particular to their purpoſe.

Min. They often mention *Mat.* 16. 18. where Chriſt ſays to St. *Peter*, *The gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt the Church*; But this Text, I before ſhew'd you, concerns the Church in general; and tho' God hath promiſed hereby that his Church ſhall never fail on Earth, yet thoſe words do not name the way and means; and God can do it without the help of an Infallible Guide on Earth.

Par. I remember another they make uſe of; 'tis our Saviour's words to the Apoſtles, *Matt.* 28. 20. *I am with you always to the end of the World.*

Min. This promiſe being made to the Apoſtles ſucceſſors as well as to the Apoſtles, cannot be interpreted to ſecure to them an Infallibility, but only a general aſſiſtance in the diſcharge of their Duty and Office; for then all the Apoſtles Succeſſors had been Infallible, by virtue of it, as well as themſelves; and the Governour of the Church of *Sardis* been perſerv'd from error, who yet is blam'd for *letting go what he had received and heard*, Rev. 3. 1, 2, 3.

Par. I will not trouble you to name the reſt, unleſs there is more difficulty to underſtand the ſenſe of them, than of theſe.

Min.

Min. Only one more, if you pleaſe, becauſe by the ſound of the words it ſeems to be a little on their ſide. 'Tis in 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. where the Church *is called the pillar and ground of Truth.* But now this, you muſt know, was ſpoken of the Church of *Epheſus* that hath long ſince, as many other Churches have done, ſinn'd away Gods Protection, and is come to ruine; the meaning of the words, not ſhewing what a Church is in her Nature and Conſtitution, but what is incumbent on her as her duty, *viz.* To be the great Preſerver and Propagator of the Chriſtian Truth, like a Pillar with a writing fixt on it, that's viſible to all that paſs by it. It ſhews not what a Church is, but what ſhe ought to be, and is to be Interpreted like thoſe Texts in *Mal.* 2. 7. *The Prieſts lips ſhould preſerve knowledg, and they ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth.* That is, he ſhould do ſo, if he does his duty; but how often does he fail therein, and the truth ſuffer by it? for ſo it follows, *but ye are departed out of the way, ye have made many to ſtumble.* Prov. 16. 10. *A divine ſentence is in the lips of the King, his mouth tranſgreſſeth not in judgment.* That is, it ſhould be ſo, but they will not ſay 'tis always ſo, unleſs they think Kings to be Infallible too.

Par. I perceive Scripture will do them but little ſervice; I would be glad to ſee whether they can have any better luck with the reaſons they pretend to.

Min. They tell us they have many, and thoſe Unanſwerable, if you'll believe them; for without this Infallible Guide, we can have no true ſenſe of Scripture, nor certainty of Faith.

Par. I miſtruſted they had not much to ſay, when I heard you mention they talkt ſo big. If theſe be their

ſtrong Arguments, I do not deſpair of an Anſwer.

Min. You need not; it's ready at hand, and what the meaneſt Capacity may be able to give: Are not all things neceſſary to Salvation plainly ſet down in Scripture? Does not the Scripture contain the duty of all? And was not God able, or was he unwilling ſo to expreſs it, as all ſhould be capable to underſtand it? Are not private men commanded *to read, to ſearch the Scriptures, to prove all things, to try the Spirits*, Men and Doctrines, that pretend to be inſpir'd, by the Scriptures? And muſt they not firſt underſtand the ſenſe of Scriptures before they can meaſure and judg of any thing by them? Did Chriſt and his Apoſtles Preach ſo as not to be underſtood by their Hearers? Could they not Write as intelligibly as they Preach'd, eſpecially ſince they wrote the ſame things and almoſt in the ſame form of words? May not ſingle perſons come to the meaning and ſenſe of Scripture by the ſame way as the Church does? Has not God Imprinted on Mens minds ſuch Natural notions of himſelf, and of good and evil, according to which all Revelation is to be interpreted? Has he not given to all, reaſon to diſcern and judg? May not Men be skil'd in the Original, underſtand the propriety of the phraſe, find out the deſign and ſcope of the Text, have the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, and muſt not the Church go the ſame way? After all, may they not as well underſtand the Laws of God, as the Definitions and Decrees of a Pope or Council?

Par. But the Church pretends to ſomething farther and beyond all this; To immediate Inſpiration, and Divine Illumination.

Min.

Min. The best of it is, she must give us something more than her bare word, before we believe her: Can she prove her extraordinary Spirit by extraordinary works, or a voice from Heaven? Is not all Enthusiasm and Quakerism founded on this Principle? Does not this wholly supersede the necessity of Scripture at all, since God can as easily reveal his mind to the Church by inspiration without Scripture, as the sense and meaning of the Scriptures?

Par. Certainly this is enough to convince any reasonable Man, That the true sense and meaning of the Scripture may be learn'd without such an Interpreter; That a Man's own Reason, assisted by the help of his spiritual Guides, consulting the sense of the Primitive Church, is the best and safest, and a direct way to a right understanding of Scripture.

Min. Yet there is one thing more that I have not mention'd; If I cannot find out the sense of Scripture without this Infallible Interpreter, *the Church*, How shall I know what the Church is? and that the Church is such an Infallible Interpreter? If you send me to be inform'd by the Scriptures, I cannot understand them till the Church has interpreted them to me; If you send me to reason and discourse, and such other ordinary means whereby other things come to be known; By the same way I may find out as well the sense of Scripture, as who is the Interpreter of them.

Par. I remember they direct us to the Scripture to find out the Church; and to the Church to find out the sense of Scripture.

Min. Is not this to dance in a Circle, and to prove nothing? a Sophism that may make mens Brains turn round, but not inform their Minds? If the Scripture must

muſt be known *before* the Church, and the Church *before* the Scripture, neither one nor the other can be known, becauſe they cannot be both *firſt*; unleſs we'l make them both to be the ſame thing, as the Church of *Rome* in effect does (who will have the Scripture to have no other ſenſe than the Church puts upon it) and then all the proof amounts only to this, *The Church bears witneſs to her ſelf.* For to ſay the Scriptures interpreted by the Infallible Church, declares the Church to be the Infallible Interpreter of Scripture, is no more than to ſay, The Infallible Church ſays ſhe is Infallible; you muſt take it on her word: But you know what our Saviour ſaid in a Caſe not unlike to this, *If I bear witneſs of my ſelf, my witneſs is not true.*

Par. But they ſay, as I am inform'd, that we muſt uſe our reaſon to diſcover our Guide; but when that is once found out, we are to give up our reaſon and all to be wholly guided by him.

Guid. in Contr. pr. p. 3. R.H.

Min. They are forc'd to allow this; for in their attempts to make a proſelyte to their Church, they ſet before him Reaſons and Arguments to move him to it, and that ſuppoſes he has both an ability and a right to judge of thoſe motives, whether they be convincing or no. And has he a right to judge of the Church, and not of its Doctrine? Or can he otherwiſe make a true judgment concerning the Church, than by judging firſt of the particular Doctrines it holds? If it is an Orthodox Faith that makes an Orthodox Church, the Faith the Church profeſſes ought to be examin'd before the Church is made choice of: But it ſeems a Man muſt uſe his Eyes and Reaſon once for all: afterwards he has no need of either; he muſt ſee by others eyes, and judge by others underſtandings: But certainly a Man muſt

quite

quite loſe his Reaſon, before he can ſo wholly abandon himſelf to anothers guidance. I may, and ought to conſult my Spiritual Guide and Teacher; but I muſt know him well firſt, and be aſſured both of his skill and honeſty, before I leave my ſelf out, and wholly caſt my ſelf upon him; every man deſires to walk ſafely, and he's the moſt likely to do it who ſees where he goes.

Par. You'l be pleas'd to give me leave to mention every thing that I can recall, that they urge in their behalf; They tell us, that there are many things in Scripture hard to be underſtood; and many Diſputes and Controverſies oftentimes ariſe about the ſenſe of it; That all Sects and Parties cite Scripture, and pretend it is on their ſide; Muſt then every Man follow his own private judgment; and Interpret Scripture according to his own fancy?

Min. No, The Church of *England* is far from allowing that; She adviſes us to compare one Scripture with another, to explain the more hard by the more eaſie, and ſo to prove what the ſenſe of Scripture is, from Scripture it ſelf; She ſends us in her Articles and Canons to conſult the *Catholick Church* in the firſt Ages, who are the beſt Witneſſes what is Truth and what is not. The Apoſtles, as it ſhould ſeem, very early drew up, and agreed upon a ſhort Summary of Faith for the uſe of the Church, and each ſent it to be carefully preſerv'd and maintain'd by the ſeveral Churches of his own Plantation; This is call'd in Scripture, *The form of ſound words*, *the proportion of Faith*, the *Depoſitum*, or thing committed to *Timothy*'s truſt; accordingly in after Ages, when any Diſpute aroſe in the Church, concerning the ſenſe of Scripture, or an Article of Faith, each Church was ſent to, to give an account, what

2 Tim. 1. 13.
Hom. 12. 6.
1 Tim. 6. 20.

what was its belief and ſenſe in that particular, and what they all agreed on, could not be look'd upon otherwiſe than the Truth, than according to that Faith the Apoſtles had taught and committed to their charge.

Par. So I have read it was in the firſt memorable Council of *Nice*; when the Hereſy of *Arius*, denying the Divinity of Chriſt, was debated by the Fathers, and a diſpute aroſe concerning the ſenſe of that Text in St. *John*, *I and my Father are one*; each Father was to bring in the ſenſe of that Church over which he preſided, and all agreeing that the Text was to be underſtood of the Conſubſtantiality of the Son with the Father, 'twas preſently ſo determin'd, and *Arius* and his Doctrine condemn'd.

Min. But you muſt here remember, as you go, That when we have recourſe to the *Catholick Church* for the ſenſe of Scripture, we appeal to it, not as to an Infallible Interpreter, but as to a moſt credible Witneſs of the Apoſtolical Doctrine. We build not our Faith on the Authority of the Ancient Fathers, but on that very thing they built theirs, the Authority of the Inſpired Writings; only we are much ſtrengthen'd and confirm'd in ours by the exact agreement it bears with theirs.

Par. Ought we not alſo to pay a due reſpect and ſubmiſſion to that particular Church, under whoſe care and government the Divine Providence hath caſt us?

Min. Yes, and to obey her in all things relating to the Order and outward Polity of it, and in matters of Faith, to follow her as far as ſhe agrees with the Scripture and *Catholick Church*; and wherein we are convinc'd ſhe does not ſo, not to ſet up a Church againſt her, to be humbly ſilent, and modeſtly diſſenting, unleſs in points fundamental, following the Apoſtle's Rule,

Artic. 20. Church of England.

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Haſt thou Faith, have it to thy ſelf. Had not every Church a right to make its own Rules and Orders for decency, and upon the breaking out of any difference, to interpoſe its Authority, for the cloſing of it, it would be very deficient in its Conſtitution, as wanting power to ſecure its unity, and conſequently both its being and well-being.

Par. Sir, I have not many things more to ſtart; They ſometimes tell us, that it's inconſiſtent with the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God, as the great Law-giver of his Church, to leave things thus at random and in confuſion, and no better to provide for its peace and unity, than to ſuffer every man to judg as he will, and believe as he liſt.

Min. All this is to pretend to be wiſer than God; Does not God know how to govern his Church without their direction? Is it not more ſuitable to the nature of Man, to be left to the uſe of his reaſon and judgment in his actions, than to be under an Infallible Dictator, that hampers, as it were, his faculties, and leaves no place for deliberation and choice? Is there any virtue in believing, where all the difficulty is not to believe, as it happens when the Judg is Infallible? Is not Peace and Concord very deſirable in the State, as well as in the Church? and muſt God be cenſur'd for an imprudent Governor, becauſe he has not taken ſufficient care of that too, by an Univerſal Infallible Judg in Civil Matters? Is it not as abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, that we ſhould be Holy as well as Orthodox? And muſt the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God be call'd in queſtion, becauſe he has not provided a never-failing means to keep men from ſin, as is pretended he has done to keep men from error? To reſtrain their wills, as to direct their judgments?

Par. They ſay again, Do we not ſee, how, for not owning the *Infallible Church*, and leaving every Man to interpret Scripture for himſelf, Schiſms and Hereſies, and Diviſions ſwarm amongſt us? What diſtractions in Religion? what endleſs Controverſies in the Church?

Min. This may be true. But will an Infallible Judg help the matter? All things neceſſary in Religion are ſo plain, that no Infallible Judg can make them plainer; his Interpretation can't be plainer than the Text. I need ask none but my ſelf, what it is *to love God?* and *to believe in Chriſt?* And for Controverſies in leſſer matters, they are of ſo little conſequence to Religion, that they may as well be born withal by mutual charity amongſt Chriſtians, as ended by peremptory Decrees and Deciſions by an Infallible Authority. But Sects and Diviſions, God knows, there are too many among us; But could an Infallible Judg be able to ſilence and put an end to all?

Par. So they pretend. But I read, that in the Apoſtles days, tho' they had the Infallible aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, *to lead them into all Truth*, there were *Schiſms and Diviſions* in the Church.

Min. It's well obſerv'd, there were ſo; and if ſo great a meaſure of the Divine Spirit could not do it then, How can we imagine that the meer ſhadow and dream of Infallibility ſhould do it now? Have the *Romaniſts* themſelves found ſo great benefit by it, that they can upon experience with any aſſurance recommend it to us?

Par. I have heard indeed, that there are as many and as fierce Diſputes and Controverſies amongſt them, as amongſt us?

Min. You were not miſinform'd; The Diſputes betwixt the *Franciſcans* and *Dominicans*, the *Janſeniſts* and the

the *Moliniſts*, are not yet put an end to; and many others might be named. As we are not agreed with them that there is ſuch an Infallible Guide, ſo are they as little agreed amongſt themſelves, who it is. Now we ſay, *Phyſician heal thy ſelf.*

Par. However I am afraid, theſe multitudes of opinions and Sects that are amongſt us, do a great deal of hurt to Religion; it is apt to make ſome men think there is none, becauſe there are ſo many; and every man uncertain of his own.

Min. It may be ſo, but there is no reaſon it ſhould; if I muſt queſtion the truth of every thing that others deny or doubt of, I muſt not believe my own eyes; for there have been thoſe that have denied there was any ſuch thing as motion; and there are thoſe that deny bread to be bread; then the *Romaniſts* cannot be certain that their Church is Infallible, for all the reſt of mankind deny it. If by a ſober and modeſt uſe of my reaſon, and thoſe Miniſterial aſſiſtances Chriſt hath afforded me in his Church, I may certainly know the true ſenſe of Scripture, I may alſo certainly know what is the true Religion, for this depends upon the other; but does it follow, becauſe others have neglected the means, and are of no Religion, that I muſt not believe mine?

Par. I ſee plainly, an Infallible Judg, were there one, could not prevent errors and hereſies from ſpringing up; pray, why does God permit them in his Church?

Min. St. *Paul* gives one reaſon of it; there *muſt be hereſies* or diviſions in the Church, *that they which are approv'd, might be made manifeſt*; and God who can bring good out of evil, can turn them ſeveral ways to his Churches good and advantage. They afford an occaſion, that the true Faith is the better explain'd and confirm'd 1 Cor. 11. 19.

to

to us; they put men upon enquiry, and the more diligently any man examines, the more clearly he discerns, and the more stedfastly he believes afterwards. To this we owe many excellent writings of the ancient Fathers, the errors and heresies that arose in their days concerning the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, were the occasion that we have those Doctrines so clearly stated, and fully explain'd to us.

Par. Sir, you have abundantly satisfied me as to this point. I ask but one question more; Since the Christian Doctrine more strictly than ever any before, binds all its professors *to unity and love and peace*; how come so many disputes and dissentions and animosities to arise amongst them?

Min. They proceed from whence all other evils come, from mens lusts and passions. That which makes some men to be of no Religion, makes others of any, and as occasion serves, of many. They have a lust to gratify, or an interest to serve, and they'l be of that Sect that can best comply, or best pay them for it. I need not tell you from what root most of the *Romish* errors and superstitions grow; and because the name of Scripture is venerable, and carries authority with it, that many times is prest into the service, and by an unnatural construction forc'd to bear witness against it self. So long as there is Vice in the World, there will be Error; no Church or Religious Society can be wholly exempt from either; that's the best and the purest that has the fewest of both.

FINIS.